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January 2003

TRAINING JOURNAL

Continuing Professional Development for Trainers

NVQs: a practical guide
In part one of a three-part series Clare Llewellyn West outlines how the system works, who benefits and provides a valuable jargon-buster.

It's not what you say – it's the way that you say it!
How to use embedded commands in training

Applied learning seminars:
Making learning 'stick' after the training event

What you feed *your* delegates can have a real impact on what *they* learn

food for thought

Plus
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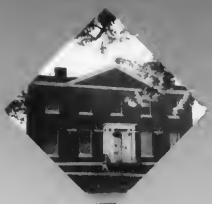

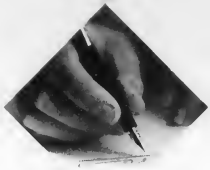

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A new year, and some new traditions

A Happy New Year to you all, and welcome to the first issue of *Training Journal* in 2003. I am breaking with *TJ* tradition this year in that the journal will not feature a long series during 2003. Over the past few years, *TJ* has approached a specific subject in depth over a 12-month period. During 2000, Phil Green wrote his very successful series 'Train the trainer'. In 2001, Edinburgh Business School shared with us the intricacies of its MBA programme. And, as regular readers throughout 2002 will know, Larry Reynolds wrapped up his series 'Stand and deliver' last month. This year I still intend to explore important subjects in some detail, but they will be in a more concentrated format and spanning fewer editions of the journal.

We kick off 2003 with an exploration of the NVQ system by Clare Llewellyn West. In Part 1 (see page 8), Clare charts the history of the qualification's development and its main beneficiaries, and tackles some of the associated 'jargon'. By complete contrast, Sandra Leyland-Williams provides an insight into our diet and its impact on our ability to learn. Turn to page 14 to read how you can serve up success in the training room. Meanwhile, David Cotton unravels some of the mysteries surrounding embedded commands in language and how trainers can use these techniques to produce exceptional results from their learners.

Finally, don't forget to dip into your free supplement, *Focus*, this month to find out what's happening in the world of e-learning.

Sincerely,

Debbie Carter
Editor

Next month ...

Michael Maynard provides some inspiration on creative problem solving, Matt Smith of FranklinCovey Europe outlines some of the pitfalls and successes in its train the trainer courses, Howard Hills explores the business benefits of using a Learning Management System, and Clare Llewellyn West continues her series on NVQs.

TRAINING JOURNAL
First published in 1965 as *Training Officer*

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Training Journal is published by Fenman Limited at its offices in Ely. The views of contributors and correspondents do not necessarily represent those of the publisher. The editor will be pleased to receive items of news or articles, either personal or of general interest.

Training Journal
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Telephone: 01353 654877
Fax: 01353 663644
E-mail: trainingjournal@fenman.co.uk
Website: www.trainingjournal.co.uk

Subscriptions
Telephone: 01353 654877
UK: £119 one year; £214.20 two years
Eurozone: € 208 one year; € 374 two years
Rest of world: £165 one year; £297 two years
Prices are correct at the time of going to print

© 2003 Fenman Limited
ISSN 1465-6523

Inside TJ

Features ...

Brain-friendly nutrition: a nutritional guide to getting the best out of your delegates

Most of us (of a certain age) will remember being told at school that eating fish makes you brainy. But as adults in a training environment, how many trainers and participants are aware of the positives and negatives that food has on our capacity to learn? **Sandra Leyland Willlams** outlines what we should be eating, and why. **14**

Language and learning: using embedded commands in training

What are embedded commands? When should they be used? And are they effective? In answering these questions, **David Cotton** explains a simple approach that really does get results. **20**

Down to earth: an introduction to applied learning

We are all familiar with the scenario ... the moment a training course ends, 'real work' kicks back in without so much as giving employees the chance to integrate their new knowledge. But, says **Nick Wright**, with applied learning seminars the outcome can be very different. **24**

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THREE PART SERIES

National Vocational Qualifications: a practical guide

Part 1: NVQs Qualifications for the era of lifelong learning

In this, the first of a three-part series on National Vocational Qualifications, **Clare Llewellyn West** outlines how the system works, considers who benefits and sorts out some of the associated jargon. **8**

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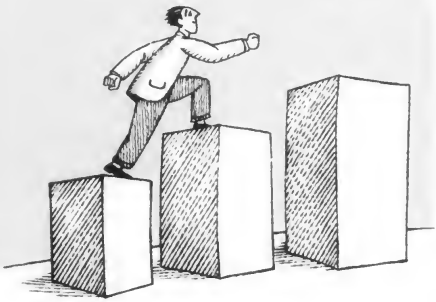

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News

Recent events, surveys and **trends**, and **up-to-date news** on the training initiatives and workplace reforms.

• STANDARDS

matrix standard makes its mark

Thirty-four organisations from across England have become the first in the country to gain the new matrix standard. A wide range of organisations – including major employers such as Rolls-Royce and Abbey National, and trades unions such as the GMB – gathered at Lancaster House in London recently for a presentation ceremony attended by Minister for Adult Learning and Skills Ivan Lewis.

matrix is the new national quality standard for organisations delivering information, advice and guidance (IAG) about learning and work. It is awarded to organisations from any sector that have achieved best practice and achieved the standard's 54 performance measures that encompass ten key areas. Speaking at the award ceremony, Ivan Lewis said: 'A key priority for the government is to improve the nation's skills and develop a workforce for the 21st century. If we are to have the high productivity, high skill and high wage economy we all want, we need a workforce with an informed demand for learning and skills. Tonight is an important step on the road to ensuring that IAG plays its full part in driving up the demand for learning and skills, both from individuals and within organisations.'

> matrix is **the new national quality standard** for organisations delivering IAG about learning and work

One of the organisations that received its matrix accreditation at the ceremony was Rolls-Royce. Phil Derges, director of Rolls-Royce's resource centres, added: 'Working towards and gaining the matrix standard has benefited our business in all sorts of ways. We've been able to benchmark against the very best practice, and have seen significant and quantifiable improvements in a range of areas – including the way in which we are able to assure that consistently high quality of advice and guidance is offered to Rolls-Royce employees in our resource centres.'

For further information contact Beverley Chubb on 0114 230 3854.

• SALES TECHNIQUES

Salespeople and marketeers ignore buyers' needs at their peril

Newly available information suggests that, in an age where e-mail, e-auctions and a new view of business relationships prevail, traditional courtesies are still expected.

Research into buyers' views of supplier salespeople reveals that although business buyers are receptive to a variety of new sales and marketing techniques, they believe most salespeople mistakenly overlook the basic rules of buyer–seller relationships.

The research, conducted by TACK International (the global provider of instructor-led sales and management training) in October 2002, provides sales professionals and the marketing industry at large with an invaluable and up-to-date insight into the likes and dislikes of buyers. The main findings show that:

- 73 per cent of buyers consider e-mail to be an acceptable prospecting medium
- cold canvassing is no longer an acceptable prospecting tool
- some buyers believe there is such a thing as a 'free lunch' – 36 per cent of respondents expected the supplier salesperson to pay for lunch, even when they suggest going out for lunch
- an increasing number of buyers are using e-auctions to select new suppliers
- salespeople are outstaying their welcome if meetings run much over 45 minutes, even if they are presenting to a buying committee
- 15 per cent of buyers (one in seven) do not consider it necessary to shake hands with supplier salespeople at the start or finish of a meeting
- 53 per cent of buyers say that salespeople should dress casually when they are visiting the buyer on a dress-down day
- 44 per cent of buyers with audioconferencing equipment use it with suppliers.

Decision makers with buying authority in business to business, services and industrial market sectors were asked a series of questions concerning the use of mobile phones, conference calls, dress code, time management, opening courtesies and introductions, and corporate hospitality.

Peter Maxwell, UK managing director of TACK International, said: 'Too many salespeople are considered by buyers to be discourteous, arrogant, insincere and interrupting. What's more, and quite unbelievably, salespeople seem not to ask fundamental questions about their buyers' business objectives and needs. With the current phase of economic uncertainty, it is those salespeople and marketeers who continue to refine their skills, understand the needs of their customers and demonstrate this understanding to their prospects who will retain a competitive edge. The need for sales skills training has clearly never been greater.'

For a full copy of TACK's research report contact Louise Lavery on 01494 766611 or at louisel@tack.co.uk

Big brother takes Richard under training wing

A talented RAF apprentice has returned to his former training provider, taking his younger brother under his wing to show him the ropes and tricks of the engineering trade.

Anthony Beach undertook his modern apprenticeship in maintenance with Newton Aycliffe based South West Durham Training Ltd, the national Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) for advanced engineering. Now his brother Richard is looking to follow his sibling's footsteps by enrolling to join the company and train for an apprenticeship to launch his own career.

Looking every inch an RAF ambassador in full uniform, Anthony revisited the company to introduce Richard to the training team and to show him around the facilities before he began a one-week placement with the company.

> 'It was good to see Anthony again and **very encouraging** that he should take the time to bring his younger brother with him'

Working for Darchem Engineering at Stillington, Anthony was able to develop his interest in aviation because of his employer's strong business links with British Aerospace. Anthony's work with Darchem inspired him to join the RAF, where he is now successfully pursuing a career as an electrical engineer.

As SW Durham Training manager Bob Waller says: 'We don't always hear how well our former apprentices are getting on, so it was good to see Anthony again and very encouraging that he should take the time to bring his younger brother with him.

'Hopefully Richard will attain the GCSE grades to successfully enrol with us. It'll be great if we can help him bridge the gap between school and the world of work with a modern apprenticeship. There are plenty of opportunities for youngsters to get a start with us.'

Anthony Beach, on the road to engineering success with the RAF, puts his brother Richard through his paces at SW Durham Training Ltd.

The younger of the Beach brothers has already set himself a number of targets. Once Richard has attained a minimum of four A–C GCSE grades – including maths, English and a science – he aims to train with SW Durham Training to become an electrical and maintenance engineer.

For further information contact Bob Waller on 01325 313194.

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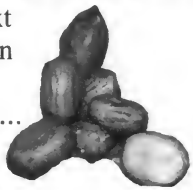

To make training sessions and meetings more effective you need to make them memorable, and to make them more memorable you need just one thing: a heightened level of audience or student involvement. In short, *interaction.*

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• BUSINESS AT WAR

Businesses need to avoid becoming casualties of war

Should military action against Iraq prove inevitable, businesses could be among the first casualties, warns Croner Consulting, business adviser and expert in employment law.

As Britain's armed forces have become more professional and reduced in number, the importance of the reserve forces has increased. The armed services rely on significant numbers of former full-time service people, who will be employed but who still have a 'reserve liability', together with 46,000 volunteer Territorial Army reservists.

According to Richard Smith, corporate and training manager at Croner Consulting, 'Many managers – and even former full-time service people – do not appreciate that they could be called away at only a few days' notice and may not be released for a period of weeks or even months.

'Individuals and their employers will be notified by the Ministry of Defence. Reservists will be called in for defined periods and employers will be required to hold open their employment until they are released. However, there are a number of things that companies can do to minimise the impact on their business.

'Employers should start now and undertake a risk analysis to identify who might be affected. If these individuals are employed in business critical positions, then managers should develop contingency plans, and perhaps train "understudies" to take the strain during absence – whether triggered by military action, illness or even holidays.

'Employers can request an exemption or a deferral. An adjudication officer will review the case and balance the needs of the business against the needs of the defence forces. If the request is rejected, there is an appeals procedure.'

For more information about reservist issues visit SABRE (an organisation established to support Britain's reservists and employers) at www.sabre.mod.uk

Alternatively, contact Rosie Featherstone or Sarah Peart at Audax Communications on 0115 941 7887.

• EVENTS

Making it happen in learning's new world

The Learning Technologies 2003 Conference, the IT training and e-learning conference for business, HR, IT and training managers will debate key components of organisational learning, at London Olympia 2 on 29 and 30 January 2003.

Developments in new learning applications, learning systems infrastructure and the use of the Internet as well as significant change in the structure of workforces and the way people work has presented a whole new world for managers concerned with developing their organisation's skills, knowledge and learning culture.

Now in its fourth year, the Learning Technologies Conference has assembled a practical and thought-provoking programme to answer the complex question of how organisations can develop effective learning strategies and make the most of investments in learning.

The conference involving forty experts from across the IT training and e-learning industry will be chaired by Don Taylor. The conference topics include: improving take-up and completion rates for e-learning; buying and using a Learning Management System; where e-learning meets e-HR; getting the 'right' content for your organisation; using a virtual learning environment; project managing a major training programme; the changing face of end-user training and certification; measuring training; embedding learning into your company culture. Key themes also include how organisational learning will develop during 2003 and an analysis of the use e-learning.

For further information visit www.learningtechnologies.co.uk

• GENDER ISSUES

Turnaround noted in number of women directors running UK's top businesses

The Female FTSE research, by Cranfield School of Management, reveals that following two years of falling numbers of women directors in FTSE 100 companies, numbers have now increased.

In 2002, the fourth year the research has been carried out, there were more female directors than ever before. Up to 7.2 per cent of all FTSE 100 board directors are female – an increase of seven women, thus making a total of 75 compared with 68 last year. However, it is in executive director posts that a significant increase has been seen with a 50 per cent improvement from ten in 2001 to 15 in 2002.

Marks & Spencer tops the table for the second year running with a 27 per cent female board – two female executive directors and a female non-executive director. J Sainsbury comes a close second with a 25 per cent female board, one female executive director and two non-executive directors – a significant improvement on its 27th place last year.

Susan Vinnicombe, Professor of Organisational Behaviour and Diversity Management, and director of the Centre for Developing Women Business Leaders at Cranfield School of Management, who co-authored the report, says: 'The increase in the number of female executive directors in the FTSE 100 in 2002 is particularly pleasing. If this increase of 50 per cent per annum continues, we will have gender parity on corporate boards in seven years! Yet with the median total earnings of FTSE 100 lead executives passing £1.5 million this year, gender parity would require a quantum leap in male attitudes to power sharing and remuneration for women.'

> 'It's bad for women, bad for business and bad for the economy to waste the potential of **half the UK's workforce**'

The Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP comments: 'All-male boards are old-fashioned. Women are now consumers and employees, and should not be shut out of the boardroom. All-male boards will never deliver the family friendly employment that women and their children need. How can women believe their work is taken seriously when it is OK for them to work at the bottom but it is men only at the top.'

Clara Freeman, chairman of Opportunity Now, whose organisation will be presenting the award to the company with the highest percentage of women on their board at the annual Opportunity Now Awards in April 2003, says: 'It's bad for women, bad for business and bad for the economy to waste the potential of half the UK's workforce. Chairmen of companies on this list should question how effective their leadership development is when only 12 companies have female executive directors.'

For further information or to request a copy of the 'The 2002 female FTSE report: women directors moving forwards' contact Lorraine Wood on 01234 754348 or at lorraine.wood@cranfield.ac.uk

Dr Peter Honey, FRSA, FCIPD, FIMC is a Chartered Psychologist and founder of Peter Honey Learning. He can be contacted on 01628 633946, at peterhoney@peterhoney.com or visit www.peterhoney.com

How do *you* decide what methods to use when designing a training programme?

When it comes to training, how do we set about marrying method to content? **Peter Honey** has been trying to find some answers.

I have been working on a project for which I am required to recommend a systematic way to match training methods to different sorts of content – knowledge, skills, attitudes (KSA) and so on. I embarked on this confident that a few days spent clicking my way around the web would lead me to the answer. Sadly, one of my early discoveries has been that there is a paucity of robust work on this. You can find plenty of taxonomies categorising different sorts of content – invariably slight variations on the knowledge, skills, attitude theme. There are also plenty of long lists of learning methods – everything from role-playing to case studies and outdoor pursuits. But there is very little advice on how to marry up the two.

In 1997, when my colleague Alan Mumford was writing his manual,[1] he conducted a survey and found that most trainers used methods they liked and/or had got used to. This may not be surprising, but it raises questions about whether choosing methods on the basis of personal whims and preferences is a sufficiently professional way to go about it.

Clearly, a method is 'a way of doing something', but there is very little agreement on what actually constitutes a method. For example, would you say work-based learning, distance learning, learning by doing and e-learning are methods? Or are these bigger things – 'modes' perhaps – each with their own methods? I suspect that one reason for there being been so few satisfactory attempts to match content and method is the difficulty of finding a suitable descriptive level. On the one hand, it is easy to be too general and finish up with platitudes and, on the other, to be too specific and end up with something complex and unmanageable.

A mode is bigger than a method in the same way that a strategy is bigger than a tactic. So all modes comprise methods and all methods can be broken down still further into sub-methods – let's call them techniques. A lecture, for example, is a method. But within a lecture you have a number of techniques such as presenting, using visual aids, demonstrating, using anecdotes, employing humour and so on.

At the modes level, matching can only be approximate, or general. For example, we all know that the acquisition of a skill (content) requires practice (a mode). This is not very enlightening. At a methods level, however, it is possible to be more precise. For example, the acquisition of a skill (content) requires some or all of the following methods: a demonstration, having a go, receiving feedback/guidance, having more goes, reviewing progress, correcting errors and so on.

> The provision of an appropriate method **does not in itself guarantee** that people will learn what we want them to learn

Some principles are beginning to emerge that give guidance when choosing methods, but they fall short of providing a really robust 'this goes with this' matching system. Here are ten such principles.

- Learning methods should be chosen based on the objective – that is, the desired learning outcome. The more precise the objective, the more it gives a steer when choosing appropriate methods.
- The more complex the skill to be mastered, the more the methods employed need to be active (as opposed to passive).
- The deeper the learning required, the more the methods need to enable understanding and internalisation.
- Choose a learning method that makes it easy to establish and acknowledge the level of prior experience/expertise that learners bring to the learning situation.
- Do not assume that any one learning method can completely achieve a learning objective. A combination of methods brings incremental benefits.
- Err on the side of choosing methods that will win over reluctant/apprehensive learners.
- If a passive and active method have the same cost, it is always optimal to choose the active method. Active methods are more time consuming, but the higher quality of learning outcome must be balanced against the higher time cost.
- Keep it simple. Ask yourself: 'What is the most painless way to get the learners up to speed?'
- Choose a learning method that makes it easy to assess the progress of the learners.
- Choose a learning method that is not only likely to achieve the specific objective, but also will make it likely that the learners will enhance their learning skills – that is, learn more about learning.

Of course, the provision of an appropriate method does not in itself guarantee that people will learn what we want them to learn. It is rather like the strip cartoon where dog owner A boasts to dog owner B that he has taught his dog to whistle. B is naturally sceptical and asks for a demonstration, whereupon dog owner A retorts, 'I said I'd *taught* him to whistle, not that he *could* whistle!'

However, the absence of a guarantee does not absolve us from doing our best to provide learning methods that are fit for purpose.

Reference

1. Alan Mumford, *How to Choose the Right Development Method*, Peter Honey Publications, 1997.

National Vocational Qualificati

Part 1: NVQs

Qualifications for the era o

The post-war system of education, which lasted into the 1970s, is remembered with nostalgia and, indeed, for the chosen few it had much to recommend it. Like many others, I was lucky enough to get to a good grammar school and become the first in my family to attend university, so I know its virtues. But the system was arbitrary. The number who passed the 11+ was directly linked to the availability of local grammar school places. It was also very rigid. If you failed the dreaded 11+ then, whatever your potential, you had a good chance of leaving school in your mid-teens with no qualifications.

Again there were the lucky ones who won apprenticeships to train in craft skills ranging from plumbing to hairdressing. On completing their training these people had a respected starting place in their chosen trade. However, many left school with few (if any) qualifications, then joined a world of work that offered little or no training, little opportunity to develop themselves and no recognition for the skills they did develop.

Then, through a range of social and economic factors, the traditional apprenticeship system started to collapse. Meanwhile new industries arrived often with no clear training strategy in place. Young people who had missed the academic boat and older workers who needed to move into new industries failed to find training. There was no objective mechanism to recognise transferable skills. The phrase 'skill shortages' entered our vocabulary. It was time for a radical new approach.

THE NVQ SYSTEM: A BRIEF HISTORY

In 1981, the Manpower Services Commission published a document entitled 'A new training initiative'. Two of the main themes it contained were occupational standards and young people. From that point, the UK started slowly to develop occupational standards within each industry.

At the same time, unemployment among young people was becoming a serious issue. The government-funded youth training programme did not offer certificated training. Employers didn't know what potential employees could actually do, trainees had no objective measure of what they had learnt and the quality control of workplace training was extremely unreliable.

In 1985, the White Paper 'Education and training for young people' set up a working group to review ➤

ons: a practical guide

In this, the first of a three-part series on National Vocational Qualifications, **Clare Llewellyn West** outlines how the system works, considers who benefits and sorts out some of the associated jargon.

f lifelong learning

Clare Llewellyn West
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Editorial

The phrase 'lifelong learning' is commonplace now from politicians and policy makers as well as members of our own profession. When ideas have such currency it is easy to forget how new they are. Of course, there have always been lifelong learners: the passionate few who found their way to evening classes and, in more recent years, the mould-breaking Open University; and the autodidacts who discovered their university in the local library. But lifelong learning as a key aspect of our society is new.

In our fast-changing and insecure world, the idea that people do not just need a good basic education but that they must continue to learn throughout their working lives seems obvious. But this idea represents as big a social shift as the presence of the personal computer in the corner of the living room. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) form a major part of that shift and, whatever their shortcomings, they have helped to move people into the knowledge society of the 21st century.

In this, the first of a three-part series on National Vocational Qualifications, we will explore not only the historical background to NVQs and what they mean, but also their value to organisations and to those who attain them, plus their relevance in today's workplace culture.

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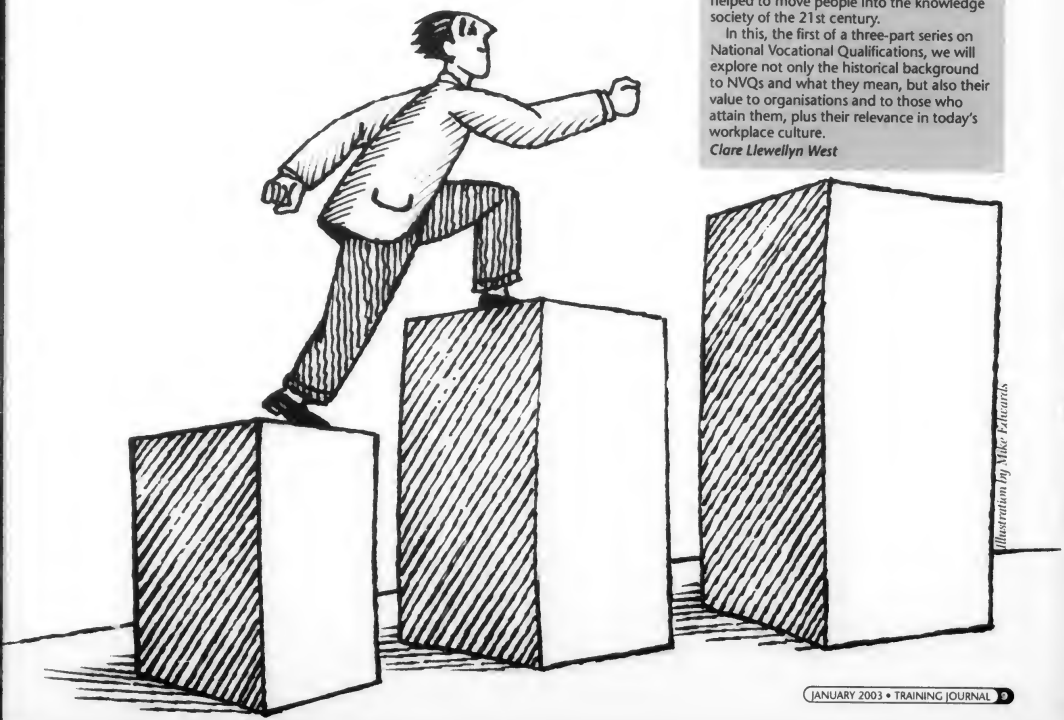
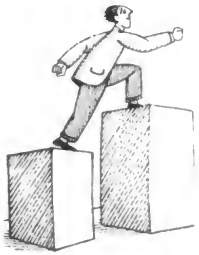


Illustration by Mike Edwards



vocational qualifications in England and Wales. One of its findings was that there was no effective national system of vocational qualifications: qualifications had evolved rather than been designed. While some industries had highly respected qualifications, others had none at all. Awarding bodies and training providers set their own agenda and the result was a confused tangle of disparate qualifications that were not geared to the changing needs of individuals, industry or the national economy. There was a call for a system of qualifications that were:

- consistent, reliable and well structured
- realistic and accessible with scope for progression
- able to offer recognition for the skills people already had
- created and implemented in partnership with industry and providers.

In 1986, the government established the National Council for Vocational Qualifications – now the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) – to set up a comprehensive framework of vocational qualifications covering all occupations and industries. Employers were persuaded to agree common standards for all occupations within their industries. Awarding bodies were brought in to convert occupational standards into qualifications – and so National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) were created with the first one awarded in 1988. This is how they are defined by the Department for Education and Skills.

NVQs are based on **a detailed analysis of the tasks and skills** involved in a particular job and are written in the form of standards

NVQs and their Scottish equivalent SVQs (Scottish Vocational Qualifications) are qualifications for work. They are proof of a person's ability to do a job. NVQs can be gained by people doing normal work and provide recognition for the skills and experience they have gained. And they allow people to gain new knowledge and skills throughout their working lives.

Case history: Jenny

Jenny* is a woman in her fifties. She had been labelled a failure at school. She had brought up a family, but the workplace didn't recognise the skills and qualities required to do this. Then, a few years ago, she started working on the production line at a local factory. She got on pretty well, and was consequently asked to train other people. It wasn't long before she was doing that most of the time. Then one day her company decided to give the workforce trainers a bit of training and get them an NVQ qualification. That was where I came in.

The first time I met Jenny she was a bundle of nerves. This felt like going back to school – and she had reverted to an anxious 13 year-old waiting to be exposed as a failure all over again. We soon got past that, and we had a lot of fun together in the classroom and on the shop floor. It was a good process. But the high spot was being able to tell her that I had assessed her meticulously against a set of national standards and had found her to be an excellent workplace trainer. I made it clear that the training we had done together had been helpful, but in the main what I was assessing was a set of skills she had developed over years of parenthood and work. Jenny glowed. For the first time in her life she was qualified; she had met the standard. It was a glorious moment.

**Here, as in all case histories throughout this short series, the person's name has been changed, but the story is a true one.*

SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

The history of NVQs sets them apart. The level of government involvement, the partnership between government, industry, awarding bodies and training providers, the attempt to set up a coherent and standardised approach to workplace qualifications – all these factors make NVQs distinctive. But there is more. NVQs are a genuinely radical approach because for the first time they have separated the process of learning to carry out a particular job from the business of getting a qualification. In the past the only way to achieve a qualification was often to go through a prescribed training route. If you could not afford the time or money involved in following that route then you could not access the qualification *even if you could already carry out the actual task in question.*

People often become very skilled through workplace learning, but before the advent of NVQs they generally had no objective way to prove that skill. That in turn undermined their opportunities for career progression. Crucially it also undermined their confidence in their own ability – they believed themselves to be unskilled and insignificant.

I have enjoyed all sorts of high spots in my career – helping people make a successful start in business, being published, winning a National Training Award – but without doubt one of the greatest pleasures my work brings is the experience of assessing an individual who has never achieved a qualification before. If you have not had that experience, then read about Jenny (see below) and perhaps you will begin to understand.

ST GEORGE AND THE JARGON

Many of you will say that NVQs are distinctive not because of their history or their structure but because of the mass of incomprehensible jargon that surrounds them and the tortured language in which they are written.

As someone who loves language and started her career as an English teacher, I am passionate about the use of good clear language in organisations. I hold no brief for the turgid or the twisted. The process of functional analysis that underpins NVQs has produced some strange and complex phrases. Those who write it are trying to present a foolproof description of an action or task and sometimes they succeed in the wrong way: it is foolproof because no one understands a word. However, the situation is improving and newer versions of, for example, the management standards are far clearer and more straightforward than their predecessors.

As for the jargon – the NVQ-speak of range and units and verifiers – well, let us be fair. Any new process inevitably creates some jargon, and NVQs are no exception. But the jargon is actually pretty self-evident once you stop to take a closer look. Essentially it comes in three categories:

- the people
- the levels, and
- the structure.

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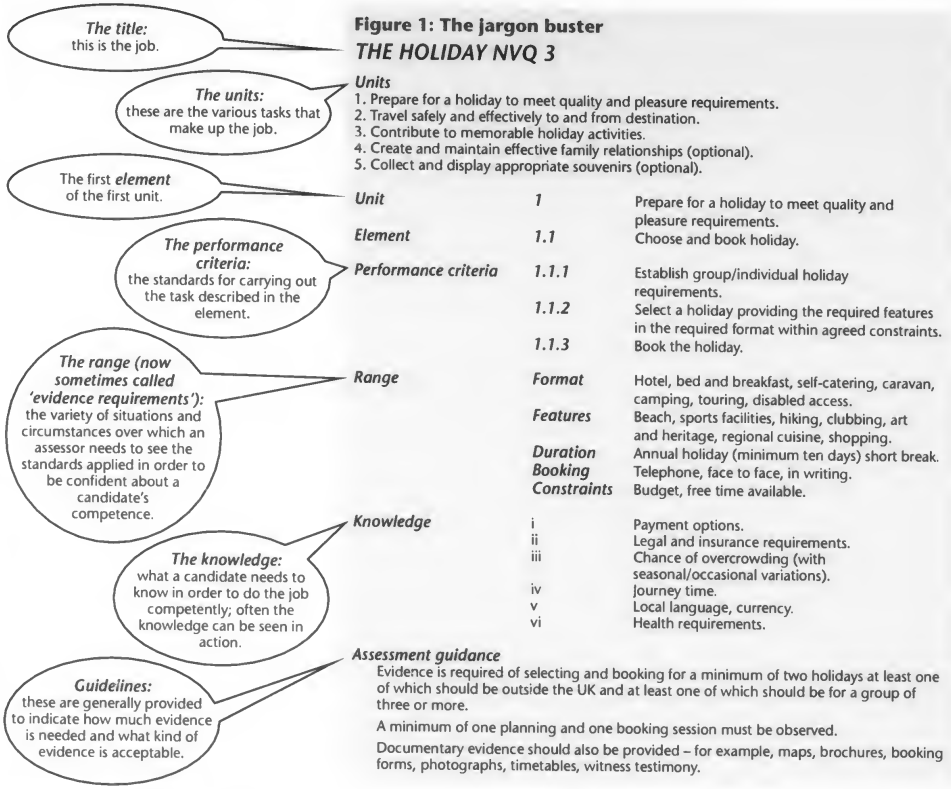
The title: this is the job.
The units: these are the various tasks that make up the job.
The first element of the first unit.
The performance criteria: the standards for carrying out the task described in the element.
The range (now sometimes called 'evidence requirements'): the variety of situations and circumstances over which an assessor needs to see the standards applied in order to be confident about a candidate's competence.
The knowledge: what a candidate needs to know in order to do the job competently; often the knowledge can be seen in action.
Guidelines: these are generally provided to indicate how much evidence is needed and what kind of evidence is acceptable.
Figure 1: The jargon buster
THE HOLIDAY NVQ 3
Units
1. Prepare for a holiday to meet quality and pleasure requirements.
2. Travel safely and effectively to and from destination.
3. Contribute to memorable holiday activities.
4. Create and maintain effective family relationships (optional).
5. Collect and display appropriate souvenirs (optional).
Unit 1 Prepare for a holiday to meet quality and pleasure requirements.
Element 1.1 Choose and book holiday.
Performance criteria
1.1.1 Establish group/individual holiday requirements.
1.1.2 Select a holiday providing the required features in the required format within agreed constraints.
1.1.3 Book the holiday.
Range
Format Hotel, bed and breakfast, self-catering, caravan, camping, touring, disabled access.
Features Beach, sports facilities, hiking, clubbing, art and heritage, regional cuisine, shopping.
Duration Annual holiday (minimum ten days) short break.
Booking Telephone, face to face, in writing.
Constraints Budget, free time available.
Knowledge
i Payment options.
ii Legal and insurance requirements.
iii Chance of overcrowding (with seasonal/occasional variations).
iv Journey time.
v Local language, currency.
vi Health requirements.
Assessment guidance
Evidence is required of selecting and booking for a minimum of two holidays at least one of which should be outside the UK and at least one of which should be for a group of three or more.
A minimum of one planning and one booking session must be observed.
Documentary evidence should also be provided – for example, maps, brochures, booking forms, photographs, timetables, witness testimony.

The people: who's involved?

Awarding bodies appoint an external verifier for every centre that has been approved to offer NVQs. This person is the quality assurance manager who represents the awarding body and ensures that standards are maintained. The external verifier is also the contact between the centre and the awarding body, and will help to interpret the standards, update assessors and tell the centre what is expected of candidates.

The approved centre will appoint an internal verifier who acts as the internal quality manager, overseeing the administration and assessment of the qualification, and assessors who assess the candidates. Verifiers and assessors need to be qualified in two ways.

- They should have a sound working knowledge of the area of work being assessed.
- They should hold, or be working towards, appropriate assessor/verifier qualifications – formerly the famous (or infamous) D Units – now A1 or A2 (assessment) or V1 or V2 (verification).2

The levels: what do they mean?

Whether you look at an NVQ in engineering, business administration, management or hairdressing, it will be defined by its subject and its level. There are five levels to the NVQ framework, which relate to the complexity and level of responsibility involved in a particular job.

- Level 1 indicates competence in a range of varied work activities, most of which will be routine and predictable. These are basic tasks with very little personal responsibility.

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- Level 2 indicates competence in a significant range of varied work activities performed in a variety of situations. Some of the activities are complex or non-routine and there is some personal responsibility. There may also be a need to collaborate with others – for example, through membership of a work group or team – so these are still fairly basic tasks but with greater variety and responsibility than Level 1.
- Level 3 indicates competence in a broad range of varied work activities performed in a wide variety of contexts – most of which are complex and non-routine. There is considerable ➤

responsibility and autonomy, and the control or guidance of others is often required. At this level there is a higher skills requirement and often a supervisory role.
- Level 4 indicates competence in a broad range of complex technical or professional work activities performed in a wide and often unpredictable variety of situations. There is considerable personal responsibility, autonomy and responsibility for the work of others, and the allocation of resources is often present. This represents a higher skills requirement combined with management level responsibility.
- Level 5 indicates competence involving the application of a significant range of fundamental principles and complex techniques across a wide and often unpredictable variety of situations. There is substantial personal responsibility and autonomy and significant responsibility for the work of others and for the allocation of resources, plus personal accountability for analysis and diagnosis, design, planning, execution and evaluation. The final level combines a very high skills requirement and a significant strategic responsibility.

NVQs have had a lot of bad press, and like anything else they are **only as good as the people and the systems** that support them

The structure: what are NVQs like?

NVQs are based on a detailed analysis of the tasks and skills involved in a particular job and are written in the form of standards. They are made up of the following.

- Title – naming the job in question.
- Level – indicating where this qualification fits into the NVQ framework.
- Units (split into Elements) – which describe the areas of activity within the job.
- Performance criteria – the heart of the qualification, describing in detail the activities involved and setting the specific standards against which the candidate will be assessed.
- Range (or evidence requirements) – describing the circumstances or situations in which the candidate needs to achieve the performance criteria in order to demonstrate competence.
- Knowledge – what the candidate needs to know in order to carry out the job competently.

References
1. A good source of general information about NVQs and many other training and education topics is the Department for Education and Skills website at www.DfES.gov.uk
2. There will be more on the new training and development standards in next month's article. Meanwhile, go to the National Training Organisation for Employment website at www.empnto.co.uk
3. Clare Llewellyn West, *The NVQ Assessor Toolkit*, Fenman Limited, 2003.

Next month ...

Clare takes a hard look at the roles of assessors and verifiers, with particular reference to the new standards and their accompanying Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements.

Like any new area it takes a little time for the jargon to sink in. So if you are still baffled, take a look at 'The jargon buster' (Figure 1, page 11), and things will begin to make sense. And before I start getting letters and e-mails, let me be clear that the Holiday NVQ is just a fantasy, but if anyone ever decides it *should* exist I want to be the first assessor!

SO HOW DO YOU GET AN NVQ?

Not by sitting in a classroom or by attending a course of lectures or by taking exams! An individual achieves an NVQ by being assessed against the standards. The individual's job is to produce the evidence that will satisfy the assessor (and the verifiers) that s/he has demonstrated that s/he is competent to carry out all the various elements of the job in question.

I will look at assessment in detail in a future article. But, in essence, candidates prove their competence through a mixture of observation by a qualified assessor and other forms of evidence such as documents, finished work and witness testimonies.

The evidence, including the assessor's notes of any observations, is generally compiled into a portfolio that sets out sufficient, valid, current and authentic evidence to satisfy the requirements of the qualification.

AND WHY BOTHER?

NVQs have had a lot of bad press, and like anything else they are only as good as the people and the systems that support them. However, I do believe they have real value when undertaken with integrity and the aim of developing as well as certificating skills. In essence they are worth doing for the following reasons.

- They are the only qualifications that relate absolutely to the requirements of the specific job someone is doing today.
- They give individuals the credit for the skills and knowledge they already have.
- They provide the opportunity to measure what they do against a nationally agreed standard and gain a qualification at the same time.
- If the candidate already has all or most of the skills and knowledge required, s/he can be assessed and gain a qualification without having further training.
- They are accessible to anyone who can do the job. They do not require other skills that have nothing to do with the job (like being able to remember lots of irrelevant facts or write essays when suffering exam nerves).
- Being assessed against clear and objective standards gives candidates valuable feedback and often raises the standard of their work. Most of us do a better job when we know exactly what is expected of us.

My aim in this article was to set National Vocational Qualifications in context and explore some of the myths and jargon that put people off. Along the way I hoped to share some of my experience and my genuine conviction that this much maligned system has real virtues and can provide a sound approach to adult learning and a terrific boost to self esteem. If you are even a little bit convinced then do please join me again next month to delve further into the mysterious world of NVQs.

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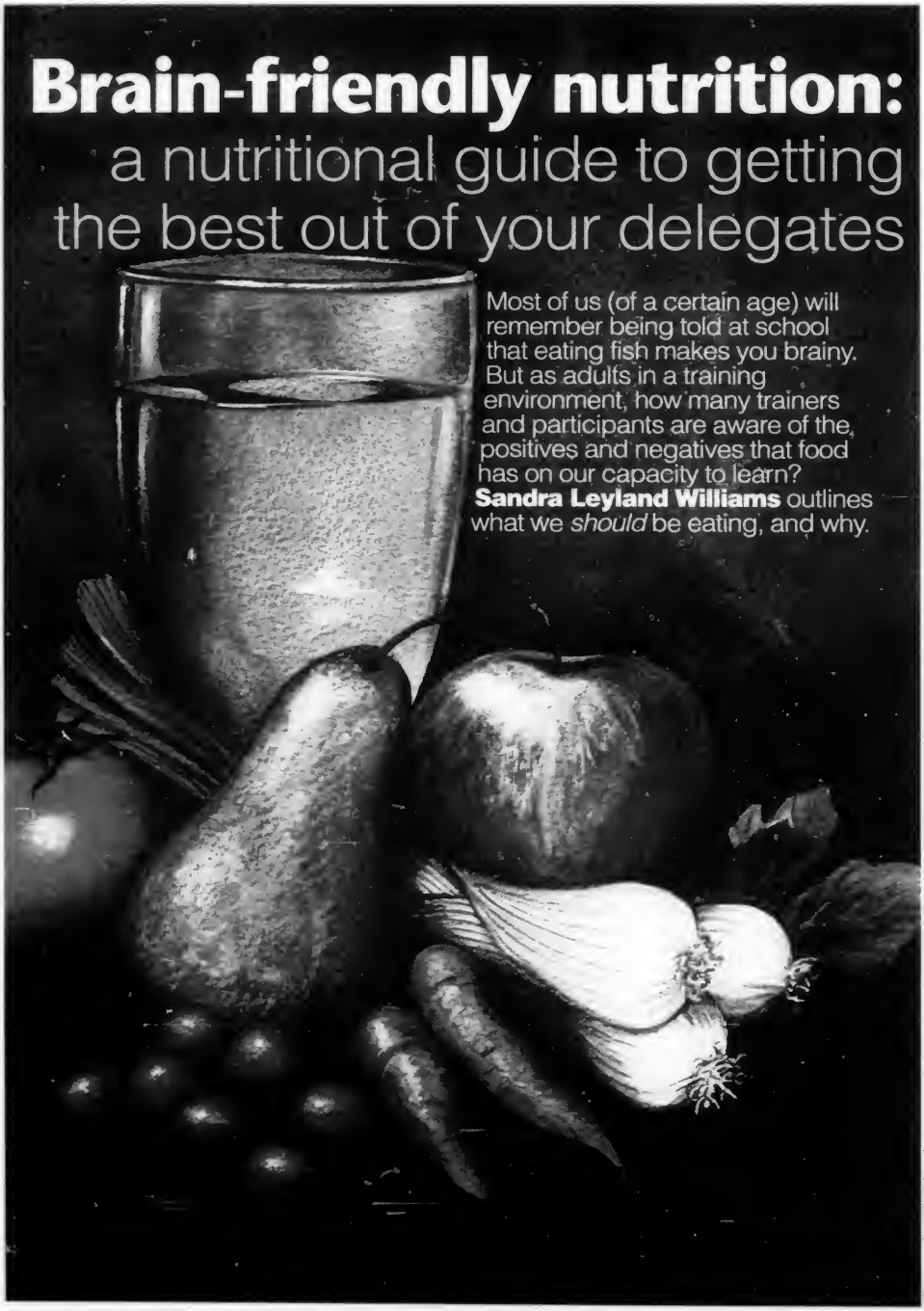
Brain-friendly nutrition: a nutritional guide to getting the best out of your delegates



Most of us (of a certain age) will remember being told at school that eating fish makes you brainy. But as adults in a training environment, how many trainers and participants are aware of the positives and negatives that food has on our capacity to learn? **Sandra Leyland Williams** outlines what we *should* be eating, and why.

Illustration by Mike Edwards

Sandra Leyland Williams
Sandra is a nutritional counsellor working with both private and corporate clients. In her work with private clients she covers a wide aspect of nutritional issues. When working with corporate clients her main area of interest is in the affect food has on the mind. For the last four years she has worked, in conjunction with Kaizen Training, on advising training venues and delegates of the benefits of providing brain-friendly nutrition. Sandra can be contacted at sandra@kaizen-training.com

You probably already know that if you give delegates a large lunch, there's every likelihood they won't do much learning for the first part of the afternoon. But did you also know that everything your delegates eat will have an effect on their learning? The effect of food on mood is now widely studied. These findings are used by a whole range of people. At one end of the scale there are those who have a mild, general interest. At the other end are doctors who are using various food combinations to relieve the symptoms of a range of mind-related illnesses – depression or Alzheimer's disease, for example.

As a trainer, this research can be used to help you get the most from your training event, particularly during the notorious graveyard shift straight after lunch. This article provides a few ideas that you can easily put into practice to change your lunch menu and transform your delegates' alertness. We'll be looking at the importance of water, ideal lunch-time ingredients to boost the brain, what snacks to provide and how to approach the venue/caterer.

WATER

Many of you will already know that it is advisable to drink 2 litres (approximately eight large glasses) of water each day. Drinking water is important for learning because the brain is actually made up of about 85 per cent water. It doesn't take long for the brain to start to dehydrate when it is deprived of a regular supply of water. Dehydration puts the body into a state of stress, causing the cerebral cortex to shut down. This prevents the kind of thinking required for learning. Dehydration also plays a major role in the causation of headaches – again, not an ideal state for learners.

In fact, this is such an important point that I want you to look around your desk right now. If you don't have a glass of water on it, then stop reading and go and get one! Now sip it slowly while you continue to read. (Water needs to be sipped in order to rehydrate the body. Drinking it too quickly will simply result in it passing straight through you.) If you get into this habit yourself, you will easily remember to make sure that all your delegates have ready access to water. Also remember that training rooms can often become very hot, and perspiration equals dehydration. In such conditions the need to drink water is even greater.

BASIC INGREDIENTS FOR BRAIN BOOSTING

So what do you put on the lunch table to keep the grey matter in peak condition and enhance learning in the afternoon? Let's look at the four basic ingredients.

Ingredient 1: protein rich foods

You will want the main ingredients at lunch time to be protein rich foods. These form the foundation of brain-friendly nutrition. Foods rich in protein include fish, seafood, eggs, meat, poultry, nuts, beans, peas, lentils, cottage cheese, yoghurt and soy products. The reason for this is that when these foods break down into their base molecules they can be used by the body to create two neurotransmitters that play a key role in memory and learning.

Neurotransmitters are crucial in allowing communication between cells. When a nerve impulse arrives at the end of an axon (a nerve fibre), neurotransmitters are released, carrying their information across a gap to the next neuron where they attach themselves to receptors. Once this task is complete the neurotransmitters are destroyed or reabsorbed by the nerve endings in which they were produced. Figure 1 (see page 16) should help to simplify how this complex process works.

> Dehydration puts the body into **a state of stress**, causing the cerebral cortex to shut down; this prevents the kind of thinking required for learning

Ingredient 2: fats

The next ingredient to consider is fats. Most people think that fats are bad, but there are some fats that are essential to the proper functioning of our body. Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) are particularly important for proper brain functioning because they help to form the coatings around our nerves, especially the myelin sheath (a protective coating around the neurones of the central nervous system). Breakdown of the myelin sheath results in a slowing of nerve impulses, and can affect concentration and memory.

Two fats of particular importance are Omega-3 (which provides a fluid that is used by the brain to carry messages from one brain cell to another) and Omega-6. Omega-3 is found in oily fish – for example, salmon and mackerel – as well as linseeds, pumpkin seeds, walnuts and their oils. Omega-6 is found in primrose oil.

You can help your delegates to get protein and fats by making available a mixture of nuts and seeds (see 'Snacks' on page 16).

Ingredient 3: vitamins and minerals

Vitamins and minerals are the fine tuning of providing the brain with what it optimally needs for learning. You could provide your delegates with a range of 'smart drinks', so called because they blend together ingredients that contain all the vitamins and minerals the brain loves. You will, however, find these difficult to get hold of and very expensive.

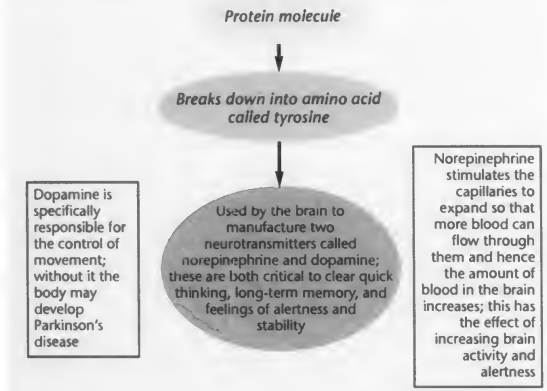
Now I know your next thought may be to provide supplements. Don't! Supplements are unlikely to have any effect in the short time you will probably be spending with your delegates. They should also only be taken when an overall profile of each individual has been completed and a definite need identified. ➤

What you will want to do is provide a range of foods that naturally contain the vitamins and minerals that will aid learning. Table 1 provides a handy checklist (see below).

Ingredient 4: complex carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are mainly linked with relaxation. Having said that, a small amount of complex carbohydrates such as wholemeal bread or brown rice will provide an excellent source of glucose. Glucose is the most basic type of energy and main fuel for the brain. All foods will eventually break down to glucose; it's just that carbohydrates are faster at reaching this stage than protein. It is very important not to overdo the carbohydrates, because they are also responsible for creating the neurotransmitter serotonin. Serotonin sends a signal to the body to relax and feel calm.

Figure 1: How protein rich foods boost the brain


Protein molecule
Breaks down into amino acid called tyrosine
Used by the brain to manufacture two neurotransmitters called norepinephrine and dopamine; these are both critical to clear quick thinking, long-term memory, and feelings of alertness and stability
Dopamine is specifically responsible for the control of movement; without it the body may develop Parkinson's disease
Norepinephrine stimulates the capillaries to expand so that more blood can flow through them and hence the amount of blood in the brain increases; this has the effect of increasing brain activity and alertness

SNACKS

A bowl containing nuts, seeds (pumpkin and sesame) and dried fruit on each table provides excellent brain-friendly snacking and is an ideal alternative to sweets. You may find that the venue you are using isn't able to provide this kind of food. But any major supermarket (or, indeed, a health food shop) will stock all the things you need.

ORGANISING NUTRITION WITH YOUR VENUE

As many trainers will appreciate, venues don't always provide the kind of food that is likely to enhance learning. In fact, some of them seem deliberately to set their lunch-time menus to be anything but brain friendly. In fairness to these venues, this could simply be because they aren't aware that eating and learning are connected in any way. Most venues are willing to help once they do know and can come up with some wonderful ideas if they are given a few guidelines.

Your venue will probably be just as busy as you are, trying to organise different events for different people. If you want it to provide a brain-friendly lunch, then you will need to make your instructions as simple as possible. Use the list given in Table 2 (see page 17) and offer to provide the venue with sample menus if it needs more ideas.

BRAIN UNFRIENDLY

What you *don't* eat and drink is just as important in enhancing the performance of your brain as what you *do* eat. Here are some of the things you will want to avoid.

Alcohol

If you or your delegates are tempted to go to the pub at lunch time when you need to concentrate in the afternoon, then think carefully about what you drink. Alcohol depresses brain function, slows the speed of learning and makes it far more difficult to pay attention. Of course, that is exactly why it is not advisable to drink and drive!

Table 1: Checklist of vitamins and minerals that will aid learning

Vitamin/Mineral	*Reason it is brain friendly*	*Where it can be found*
Vitamins A, C and E/selenium	Known as antioxidants. They slow brain ageing. Between them they improve memory, increase mental alertness and intelligence, and reduce the effects of stress.	Vitamin A is found in eggs, cheese, butter, liver and as beta carotene in fruits and vegetables – especially dark green vegetables. See below for C and E. Selenium can be found in fish, shellfish, whole grains and brazil nuts.
B vitamins	Essential for energy production and optimal brain functioning.	A range of fruits and vegetables (especially green) and in fish.
Vitamin C	Helps to make anti-stress hormones and turn food into energy.	A wide variety of fruit and vegetables.
Vitamin E	Helps body to use oxygen. Oxygen is essential for good brain functioning.	Sunflower seeds and oil, peas and beans, tuna and salmon.
Iron	Vital for energy.	Pumpkin and sesame seeds, nuts, prunes, sardines and beef.
Magnesium	Needed for energy. A lack of this mineral can cause confusion and depression.	Nuts, green peas, seafood, dried fruit, and vegetables.
Manganese	Needed for optimal brain function.	Nuts, watercress, pineapple, okra, berries, lettuce and oats.
Zinc	Needed for mental alertness, memory and concentration.	Root ginger, nuts (especially pecan, brazil and almonds), green vegetables, haddock, egg yoke, whole wheat, rye and oats.

Caffeine

Caffeine is found in coffee, tea and cola drinks. It is an extremely powerful drug. In an emergency situation it will do a wonderful job of keeping you awake – you'll know what I mean if you've ever used a strong cup of coffee to keep you alert when you need to drive home at night. Having said that, caffeine dehydrates the body, eventually leaving it more tired than it was before. Caffeine, therefore, is not desirable for long-term concentration.

I need to return to the statement that caffeine is a 'powerful drug'. As with any drug, if an addict is deprived of it s/he will suffer from withdrawal symptoms. In the short term, these symptoms can be worse than drinking the coffee itself. Encourage the coffee drinkers not only to keep their intake to the minimum *they* feel is necessary for them but also to drink lots of water.[2] And, along with tea and coffee, do provide herbal/fruit teas plus a constant supply of water on your training events.

Sugar

Yes, sugar may give you a quick high, but this is short lived and will leave you lower than you started. Sugar is an anti-nutrient. In other words, it has no nutritional value of its own and needs to draw on nutrients already in your body to digest and eliminate it. So save your chocolate bar until you get home at the end of the course. All that extra brain activity surely deserves a treat!

Overeating

If you eat too much – even of the foods that are ideal for alertness – it will have the effect of making you feel sleepy. Think of your body as a factory with several production lines. If the 'food processing production line' has too much coming through, it will need to take 'workers' from other places in order to deal with the excess volume. In other words, brain capacity will be shut down while excessive digestion takes place.

Other foods

Avoid foods that produce the neurotransmitter serotonin. These are much better suited to your evening meal, usually a time when you want to relax. The main ones are pasta, starchy vegetables (for example, potatoes, squash, corn), bread, cereals, milk and bananas.

CONCLUSION

Does brain-friendly nutrition really work? Well, research shows that certain foods are responsible for producing certain neurotransmitters. It also shows that the neurotransmitters norepinephrine and dopamine play a key role in quick, clear thinking, while serotonin induces a sense of well-being, relaxation and sleepiness.

I have organised many training courses with a brain friendly lunch, and they always get positive feedback. Sometimes the delegates are specifically told that the lunch has been designed to aid their learning and sometimes they are not. In fact, the positive comments of an unsuspecting member of the Fenman team about just such a lunch led me to write this article. Of course, in this case the proof of the pudding is *not* in the eating! Try a brain-friendly lunch on your next set of delegates and judge the response for yourself.

Table 2: Instructions to the venue for providing brain-friendly food and drink

What we would like on arrival and at breaks

- ☑ Jugs/bottles of water on every table in the conference room, refilled each break time.
- ☑ Fruit on arrival and at break times instead of biscuits or pastries.

What we would like for lunch

- ☑ A wide variety of colourful salads using beans, raw vegetables and traditional salad ingredients.
- ☑ Lightly cooked vegetables (still crunchy is great).
- ☑ High protein foods (for example, fish, chicken, small amounts of other meat, beans, lentils and tofu).
- ☑ Fruit salad.
- ☑ Cheese with oatcakes.

Provide with caution

The following foods can be provided in small quantities. Please treat as a condiment rather than a main ingredient.

- ☑ Wholemeal bread.
- ☑ Brown rice.

What we want to avoid

- ☑ Anything containing sugar, white flour or white rice (because they rob the body of essential vitamins and minerals). Pastry is a big taboo. We appreciate this makes your choice of dessert difficult. We've made some alternative suggestions on the lunch menu.
- ☑ Artificial sweeteners, additives, preservatives and anything highly refined.
- ☑ Potatoes.
- ☑ Bananas.
- ☑ Pasta.

Save your chocolate bar until you get home at the end of the course; all that extra brain activity surely deserves a treat!

If you would like more information or to give feedback on your experience of providing your own brain-friendly lunch, contact sandra@kaizen-training.com

Reference

1. You can find a selection of menus at www.clicknutrition.co.uk
2. If you would like any tips on how to give up caffeine, then e-mail the author at sandra@kaizen-training.com

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JANUARY 2003

How to complete this record

Key learning themes from this issue

Brain-friendly nutrition: a nutritional guide to getting the best out of your delegates

This article aims to inform readers of the importance of nutrition to learning. As well as some background information, it details food that both aids and hinders learning. A checklist is provided for caterers and additional menu information available via a website if required.

National Vocational Qualifications: skills for all? Part 1: NVQs, then and now

NVQs provided qualifications that were:

- consistent, reliable and well structured
- realistic and accessible with scope for progression
- able to offer recognition for the skills people already had
- created and implemented in partnership with industry and providers.

Down to earth: an introduction to applied learning

'Learning leakage' is a common problem following training events. Leakage is not necessarily linked to the quality of the training itself. Learning can be enhanced by providing follow-up 'earthing' mechanisms. An applied learning seminar is an effective, practical earthing method.

Language and learning: using embedded commands in training

The most important and yet most overlooked tool in the trainers' toolkit is language. By embedding command and suggestion words in longer, apparently innocuous sentences, then using different tonality to utter those embedded words, we can access the unconscious minds of others directly, and quickly and effectively change minds.

Article / Feature	Why did I read the article? What objectives did I hope to satisfy?

What did I learn
from the article?

How will I use this?
What further action will I take?

What do I want / need to learn?

How can I achieve this?

What support or resources will I need?

How will I evaluate my success?

Target dates for review and completion:

Spotlight

Rick Williams is particularly well qualified to train in the disability and equality field for he has been totally blind since the age of 17. **Mike Levy** finds out more.

A couple of years ago, then in his late 40s and after nearly 30 years of full-time employment with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Rick Williams made an important decision – to move into the precarious world of freelance training. Rick had been a staff trainer with the HSE in the early 1980s, prior to moving into personnel and corporate services management. His last role as regional development manager was to develop, implement and monitor his region's strategic change plan. 'While I was with the HSE I kept my training away from disability. I guess I didn't want to be pigeon-holed,' he admits. But having entered the training world, he had to choose his area of specialism. 'I looked at offering my services as a general management consultant,' he says, 'but frankly, it didn't really interest or excite me.'

> 'Being a one-time senior manager who also happens to be blind does give me greater credibility when I'm talking to a management team about disability and attitudes'

Rick also admits that the level of competition in this field is very high. He decided to offer training and development in the whole area of disability and equality, a hot topic since the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 has been turning up the heat on employers. He admits that his first two years as a freelance have been tough. 'I really miss the company of others and the ability to pop into the next office to chew over ideas,' he says. 'But I've learnt you have to be really disciplined and self-motivated.'

RJW Consultancy, Rick's organisation, has done well in its short time, and he has attracted some blue chip clients such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), British Gas and the AA. His experience over the years has been that, when it comes to disability or other forms of potential discrimination, many companies have all the right strategic plans, 'but it can be very different at the shop floor or office level'. His own disability has been a positive driver in his new business. 'Being a one-time senior manager who also happens to be blind does give me greater credibility when I'm talking to a management team about disability and attitudes,' he says.

Disability equality: Rick Williams' top ten reminders for trainers

1. One in eight people who work are disabled and will be represented in your audience – even if you don't notice.
2. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requires you to make 'reasonable adjustments' to the way you work in order to ensure that disabled people have equal access to the training you provide.
3. Ensuring equal access means overcoming barriers in a number of areas with reasonable adjustments being considered for a range of reasons – not just in the physical environment and the information you provide – for example, dealing with attitudinal and sensory-related issues.
4. 'Reasonable adjustments' should be considered in three key activities: getting around and using the venue's facilities; accessing the learning activities/information; and relationships with other participants.
5. 'Reasonable adjustments' are likely to be needed in your training and publicity materials in order to make them accessible to disabled people. This includes websites and e-learning.
6. The majority of reasonable adjustments are likely to cost nothing or have minimal cost implications, especially where good practice is used as a matter of course.
7. Disabled people's specific requirements depend on the individual, not just the disability, and assumptions should not be made about what needs to be done.
8. Asking a disabled person what his/her specific requirements might be is the best way of finding out.
9. Employ sensitivity if the impact of someone's disability might affect the group.
10. The business case for getting it right is compelling; getting it wrong can cost business, reputation and cause brand damage.

That said, Rick is not so convinced that attitudes and stereotypes have changed all that much. When trainees first see him with his dark glasses they are, he says, still taken aback. 'Generating changes in attitude is very difficult, but I focus on the clear business (and legal) case for adopting better policies,' he explains. 'For instance, I never ask employers to consider taking on a person with disabilities out of sympathy. There is a clear business case. People are always amazed to learn that one in eight people have some kind of disability.'

The new legislation need not be so frightening, says Rick. 'A lot of changes are just about common sense and being prepared. It's all about taking each case as it comes, being prepared and thinking ahead, he says. In other words, 'don't try to solve problems before you find out more about the disabled person in your group'. Rick claims that businesses forget about the huge market among disabled people – worth, it is estimated, some £40 billion per year.

> 'I focus on the clear business (and legal) case for adopting better policies … I never ask employers to consider taking on a person with disabilities out of sympathy'

Rick's plans are to expand into the wider area of discrimination and equality. He is busy travelling the country and has little time for leisure. 'I recently went sky diving for charity. I'm glad I did it but will never do it again!' It seems that Rick Williams already has enough huge challenges to face.

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or visit www.mikelevy.co.uk

Langua

What are embedded commands? When should they be used? And are they effective? In answering these questions, **David Cotton** explains a simple approach that really does get results.

As trainers, we are experts in translating business requirements into learning objectives, developing content and methods that fulfil those learning objectives, and finally delivering that content. Through trainer training courses and classroom experience we discover what works and what does not. We are imaginative and creative, open to new ideas and we take risks. Through all this, we pay scant attention to the language we use in delivering training. In this article, I explore one small aspect of language and its relationship to the learning experience – the use of embedded commands.

'Conscious mind' and 'unconscious mind' are labels of convenience. The mind is not so neatly divided. Even the term 'mind' is an abstract, ill-defined concept. For the purpose of this article, the term 'conscious mind' refers to the individual's awareness of sights, sounds, feelings, tastes and smells at any given moment. The term 'unconscious mind' refers to those sights, sounds, feelings, tastes and smells of which the individual is not aware at a given moment but whose existence could be verified if attention were drawn to them.

Individuals have a limited span of conscious awareness. The conscious mind is critical and alert, and it responds readily to language. The unconscious mind is somewhat protected by the critical faculty within the conscious mind. However, there are many language constructs, highly developed by hypnotherapists and other

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ge and learning: using embedded commands in training

excellent communicators, that can effectively bypass the critical faculty and address the unconscious mind directly. Trainers can use these constructs to accelerate the learning process, and to help course participants retain and recall more of what they have learnt. We can embed commands in seemingly innocuous sentences and elicit the results we require faster, and apparently effortlessly.

Is the practice ethical? Used with integrity, yes. The trainer's responsibility is to ensure that course participants learn in the most effective ways possible. A learner entrusts a trainer with that responsibility. Those listening to a well-formed language construct may still reject it, consciously or unconsciously. We cannot elicit any response that stretches individuals beyond their own moral boundaries; whether or not their conscious minds have immediately registered the commands we have uttered, the unconscious will prompt the conscious should we suggest anything that is offensive or morally unacceptable.

Consider how you naturally utter a command. In spoken English, commands are issued with a downward inflection. The musical cadence of a command moves from its starting note to a lower note. Trying saying 'Sit down!' in two ways:

- first with the word 'down' on a higher note than the word 'sit', and
- second with the word 'down' on a lower note.

The latter sounds and feels right. In spoken English, commands always follow this pattern of inflection. The unconscious mind registers this inflective pattern as a command and responds accordingly. Sometimes, the conscious mind also registers the command, sometimes not.

> We can embed commands in **seemingly innocuous sentences** and elicit the results we require faster, and apparently effortlessly

We're polite people. In training, we often avoid directive speech. Instead of saying 'Sit down now', we say, for example, 'Would you mind sitting down now?' Say this out loud and listen to the musical cadence. Our desire to be polite and to avoid sounding commanding often results in a higher pitched voice and greater modulation than we would employ in our normal speech.

Although we may downwardly inflect the words 'down now', there is no implicit command in the sentence. Often, the result is that we have to ask our course participants several times to sit down. Their conscious minds have heard the request, but at the unconscious level the sentence creates no particular image or feeling to which they naturally respond, so they do nothing. Notice how often course participants don't appear to have 'heard' what you ask them to do. ➤

HOW TO EMBED COMMANDS

There are four simple stages in creating an embedded command.

1. Think about the command words you would use if you were being directive – for example, 'Sit down now'.
2. Add some 'fluff' words (some call them 'weasel words') – words that don't alter the meaning of the sentence you are about to utter but that add a tenor of politeness – for example, 'Why don't you …?' 'Why don't you sit down now?' is perfectly innocuous.
3. Mark the command words so that they stand out a little from the rest of the sentence. Say the words 'Sit down now' just a little louder than the other words. If course participants are watching you, gesture towards their seats as you utter the words 'Sit down now'.
4. Downwardly inflect the last three words, so that you are using the normal commanding tonality. The effect of the downward inflection and tonal marking of the words is registered in the unconscious mind as a command, and most of your participants will respond immediately to it.

The trainer's responsibility is to ensure that course participants **learn in the most effective ways** possible

The physical gesture makes the command even more irresistible. The example is trivial. The effect is powerful. So the formula for creating simple embedded commands is: fluff words *plus* command *using* downward inflection and tonal/physical marking.

At first sight this may appear terribly contrived, but in fact you use these constructs all the time. The formula is the result of observation of how people communicate effectively rather than a contrivance to change your ways of communicating. If you can model the effective formula purposely, then you can create powerful communications with observable results in your training. Consider these sentences.

- 'Why don't you have a look at this now?'
- 'Will you have a go at this?'
- 'Did you know you can do this too?'

Most people have a preferred **'representational system'**, or way of processing information internally

Each of them is perfectly natural speech and each contains an embedded command.

- 'Why don't you *have a look at this now*?'
- 'Will you *have a* go at this?'
- 'Did you know you can *do this* too?'

By tonally marking and downwardly inflecting the italicised words, each sentence becomes irresistible to the unconscious mind of the listener. The fluff words in the first example precede the command. In the other two examples, the command is embedded within fluff words.

A more subtle approach is to spread the command words through a sentence. The command words don't have to appear adjacently in your sentence, as long as they appear in the order in which they would be spoken in a command. Although it is more difficult to achieve a downward inflection with words scattered through a sentence, clear tonal marking can still allow the words to register in the unconscious mind of the listener as a command. For example, practise the following, tonally marking the italicised words and slightly exaggerating the downward inflection on the final word.

'You know that this is something that *you* may want to *try – it* can't hurt *now*!'
(Translates as 'You try it now'.)

USING GESTURES

Let's explore the use of gestures for a moment, then look at more sophisticated ways of embedding commands. Most people have a preferred 'representational system', or way of processing information internally. For some people it is primarily visual, for some auditory and for some kinaesthetic (related to feelings or sensations). Research has suggested that, in general:

- individuals processing information visually will tend to look up
- those thinking auditorily will tend to look to the side (towards their ears), and
- those processing kinaesthetically will tend to look down, often to the hand they write with.

In practice, we all use all our senses, and different occasions will demand that one sense predominates. As a trainer, you can harness these processing styles with gestures. As you issue an embedded command, you can direct your course participants to the sense that you would have them employ simply by gesturing. For example, if you want people to listen to what you are saying, construct the appropriate embedded command and, as you issue it, either tip your head slightly to one side or use your hand to point towards your own ear, or do both. At the unconscious level, each gesture will be interpreted as a command (or reinforcement of the command) to listen. Gesture or look up, or both, if you want your participants to visualise. Gesture or look down (or both) if you want your participants to pay attention to their feelings about what's happening. The combination of language, tonality and gesture is irresistible.

If you are coaching an individual, you can refine your gesturing to match perfectly the processing of the coachee. Notice the directions your coachee's eyes follow as you prompt for questions that demand visual, auditory or kinaesthetic responses. Although these visual directions may differ between people, they tend to be absolutely consistent within each individual. In gesturing to support your embedded commands, motion or look in the direction that your coachee would naturally look to process information in the appropriate system. This directs the coachee to access the representational system most appropriate for the learning that you are facilitating.

THE PRESUPPOSITION

There are many more sophisticated linguistic constructs that support embedded commands. The first of these is the presupposition. Here's an example: 'I don't know whether *you can learn this method* quicker than that one *now*.'

This simple sentence contains several layers of complexity. The presupposition is that the listener will learn one method or the other. There is no doubt that the learning will take place. The tonally marked and downwardly inflected 'you can learn this method' is directive – this is the method of choice and the one you are actually going to learn. A further device is the word 'can', which should receive a little extra tonal emphasis. 'Can' works at many levels.

- It gives permission (you are allowed to do it).
- It empowers.
- It entrusts.
- It leaves little doubt about the individual's ability to do something ('Of course you can do it').

Finally, the word 'now' adds urgency to the execution of the command. 'Now' is a powerful word attached to any embedded command.

There are many ways of formulating presuppositions. Some examples follow. Can you spot both the presupposition and the embedded command in each sentence?

- 'Perhaps you would be more comfortable if you sit in that chair to learn.'
- 'As you do X, so you can notice Y.'
- 'How much do you want this?'
- 'You don't want to do that yet.'
- 'You may feel differently when you remember the key points.'

THE USE OF QUOTING

A simple but highly effective device for constructing an embedded command is the use of quoting. Instead of taking responsibility for a statement, you can say that you heard it from someone else. Within the quoted or paraphrased statement, embed the command. The quote becomes the fluff around the edge of the command. Because you are quoting someone else, you can be very directive without the direction apparently coming from you. It doesn't matter much whether or not someone did tell you these gems of wisdom – trainers are notorious brokers of apocryphal stories. Let's look at a couple of examples.

- 'Someone told me you can *move much quicker* if you *imagine you are as light as a feather*.' (Two commands for the price of one here.)
- 'I once heard that *you can use that tool much more effectively by* …'

NEGATIVES

Negatives offer another fascinating avenue for exploration. You can talk in negatives, but you can't experience them. In order to negate something, you have to create an image or sense of the very thing you are trying to negate – for example: 'Don't think about cheese. Don't imagine a block of cheese. And don't think about the smell of it or the texture of a crumbly cheese on your tongue.' To negate the idea of cheese, you have to imagine cheese, through whatever representational system seems appropriate. The failure of the negative to exist in experience accounts for the failure of diets. 'I will not *eat a cream cake*. I won't *think about food*.' These two short sentences, uttered to ourselves, each contain an embedded command.

In training, you can employ negatives more positively. Use the negative construct as the fluff words and embed the command within it, as the following two examples show.

- 'You don't really need to *listen to what I'm saying now*.'
- 'It's not necessary to *make some notes* at this point, but you may find it helpful.'

> Using well-formulated embedded commands, you can help course participants to **learn more effectively**

PHONOLOGICAL AMBIGUITY

Phonological ambiguity can be used to great effect in an embedded command. This is the notion of using a word that is interpreted differently by the conscious and unconscious minds. The unconscious mind appears to be literal and to make little distinction between the meanings of words that sound the same – for example, 'here' and 'hear' appear to be processed the same way in the unconscious, where the conscious mind establishes meaning through context.

You might say: 'I'd like you to *give me your feedback* on this idea, *here*.' The unconscious allows for the meaning of 'here' as 'hear' and the command alerts the participants to listen to what is coming and then give feedback on it. It's a great attention grabber. You can reinforce the word 'here' by gesturing towards your ear or tilting your head a little to one side, thus directing the listeners to process the information aurally.

As an aside, a useful ambiguous command for sales staff is the parting shot '*Bye now*'. This simple two-word phrase, downwardly inflected and tonally marked is ambiguously interpreted as '*Buy now*!'.

LINKING WORDS

Linking words such as 'as', 'while' and 'during' can support embedded commands. Here are some examples.

- 'As you *do X*, then you can *start to do Y*.'
- 'As you *complete this exercise in the next minute or so*, you can *start to think about the feedback you will give when we reconvene*.' (Note the presupposition here, too.)

You can have great fun with embedded commands. At first they take a little practice, but they will soon become a natural part of your training repertoire. Try them on your friends and family without telling them first what you are doing, and notice how quickly you start to elicit the expected results. Using well-formulated embedded commands, you can help course participants to learn more effectively, respond quicker to classroom direction, and retain and recall more.

Down to earth: an introduction to applied learning

We are all familiar with the scenario … the moment a training course ends, 'real work' kicks back in without so much as giving employees the chance to integrate their new knowledge. But, says **Nick Wright**, with applied learning seminars the outcome can be very different.

Ever had that experience where you walk out of a training room filled with all sorts of new insights and ideas, only to be collared by someone asking you to come and deal urgently with some crisis that has taken place back at the office? Two hours later, you're driving home through traffic and find yourself struggling to remember anything of what you learned that day. If you can identify with this experience, you're certainly not alone. The potential for 'learning leakage' to take place after a training event is, in fact, so great it's amazing that many of our training efforts manage to make any real difference at all. It's not just about what happens in the training room. A combination of the pace, pressure and complexity of work in many organisations means that there are simply too many things to distract us. Two weeks after the event, most training experiences remain little more than a distant memory. If that wasn't bad enough, ideas that work well in the training room don't always work out that way when we get back to the workplace. Take Suzanne, for example …

A WASTE OF TIME?

The case of Suzanne

Suzanne attended time management training because she found herself persistently missing deadlines. The techniques she learnt on the course were simple and practical, and could certainly help if she put them into practice. Suzanne returned to work feeling cheerful, empowered and confident.

Three months later, Suzanne's filing trays are certainly more smartly labelled than they were before. However, she still misses most deadlines despite knowing in theory what she should do to address this. Her manager blames the training course – 'Just proves what a waste of time and money all this training stuff is' – and Suzanne feels despondent that she still seems so unable to correctly work out her priorities.

I believe Suzanne's problem wasn't necessarily that the training was of poor quality in its own right. The real problem for Suzanne was that the course didn't tackle those underlying personal and environmental characteristics that, in everyday practice, inhibit her willingness or ability to implement what she'd learnt. Perhaps it's unrealistic for short courses to address these kinds of issues in any real depth, but that does raise the question of where they could be tackled instead.

One method would be for Suzanne to meet with her line manager, team colleagues or mentor after such an event in order to look at how she could apply learning in practice and overcome any obstacles. In principle, this sounds great. In practice, many line managers feel too busy to follow-up staff learning experiences or, quite commonly, at a loss to know how to do so. A polite 'I'm pleased that you found the day helpful' (for which read 'Now let's get back to the real work') is the

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most positive response that many can expect on return from a training day.

Staff, too, might feel too busy or reluctant for other reasons to discuss learning points and potential difficulties with their line manager or team colleagues, especially if they believe the line manager and/or colleagues are a contributing factor to the problems they face. Many staff, too, don't have a mentor to refer to or, perhaps, a mentor who understands well enough the real difficulties the mentee might face when trying to implement learning in the workplace.

APPLYING THE LEARNING

The case of Darren

Darren is a middle manager in an industrial firm where threats of redundancy are real. The difficulty he faces is seeing problems arising on the shop floor that would almost certainly impact company business adversely but, nevertheless, feeling afraid to report them to his director in case he is considered incompetent in dealing with them. Darren attended assertiveness training to see if he could improve his ability to communicate well with his superiors without feeling overwhelmed by nerves.

> The advantage of working in a seminar group is that participants have **already begun to get to know each other**, and the trainer, at the original event

The course went well and Darren certainly found ways of expressing himself more assertively within the training group. However, when he arrived back at work the next day, he found himself immediately reverting to his former behaviour as soon as the director approached him with a minor technical query. Darren admitted feeling frustrated with himself, but decided to jot down a few notes about what had happened anyway.

Two weeks later, Darren attended a half-day applied learning seminar that had been pre-arranged as an integral part of the original training course. Pre-arrangement in this way helps to increase follow-up attendance by removing the 'optional' (that is, 'only attend if nothing else comes up') component. The applied learning seminar was attended by all course participants and led by the course trainer – who, this time, acted as consultant/facilitator rather than trainer. Participants were asked to do the following. ➤

- Mentally and emotionally re-visit the original course by recounting together what had happened on the day, what they had felt like, what they had learned, what they had found difficult and so on.
- Report back to the group on what situations they had faced since the course that had required an assertive approach, what had happened, what they had felt like, what they had done, what happened next and so on.
- Describe specific situations since the course where they had felt confident and effective, alongside experiences that they had found particularly difficult.
- Help each other to explore personal and environmental factors (for example, Darren's fear of redundancy) that were acting as blocks to modified behaviour, along with practical, workable strategies to address them.

The advantage of working in a seminar group like this is that participants have already begun to get to know each other, and the trainer, at the original event. This relational aspect often oils the wheels for tackling more difficult and 'confessional' areas together at the seminar itself. After all, to say 'I have failed miserably at applying what we learnt on the training course' takes a considerable degree of personal and professional courage.

Participants are also often able to empathise with one another on the basis of shared experience. A comment such as 'I have felt like that, too' can open the group to a level of honesty in which deep learning can start to take place. The facilitator's role becomes one of enabling group members to identify and own their experience to start with, then to move on from that place to find practical solutions together.

Some applied learning seminar groups work so well together that they **decide to continue meeting** periodically in the future

KEEPING THE FOCUS

The solutions orientation of applied learning seminars is one aspect where considerable resistance can be encountered. It's often easier for a group to stay in catharsis mode than to move on to hard questions of personal responsibility. 'That would never work in my team' or similar objections to solutions offered need to be countered by the facilitator with something like 'OK – so what *would* work?', possibly opening out the question to the wider group for additional perspectives.

Another problem that applied learning seminars can encounter is that participants get sidetracked or stuck if issues are raised that are, practically speaking, unresolvable by group members or fall outside of the applied learning seminar remit. In such circumstances, the facilitator can draw this observation to the attention of the group and offer to write the issue on a flipchart so that it has been noted but ceases to be a preoccupation or distraction. At the end of the ALS meeting, participants themselves have the task of deciding what they want to do with the flipchart sheet.

These points each demonstrate the importance of having a third-party facilitator present. Although it is possible for applied learning seminar members to facilitate their own meeting, this loses the additional input that the trainer/consultant can bring, and my experience is that participants often become so distracted by content that the meeting loses focus and falls into relative disorganisation.

MAINTAINING THE CONTACT

The converse can also be true. Some applied learning seminar groups work so well together that they decide to continue meeting periodically in the future. In such cases, they tend to transform themselves into Action Learning groups or something similar. One group I worked with decided to open each subsequent meeting with a special time, called 'Confessions and commitments'. Although this time did have its humorous aspects, participants each agreed to report on progress and to subject themselves to fairly rigorous peer review before making new practical commitments in terms of personal work practice.

Most applied learning seminar groups don't tend to progress to this stage for reasons such as time constraints at work. They may, however, agree to meet periodically in ones or twos for mutual support where peer relationships have been established. Alternatively, they may decide to meet again – say, three months after the first applied learning seminar – to encourage one another, review progress and continue to problem solve in the light of growing experience. The applied learning seminar model is flexible in this respect, its principal focus being on grounding of learning rather than its own mechanics.

In my experience of running applied learning seminars to date, I've been very encouraged by the level of knowledge that participants have managed to retain, even some time after the original event, in comparison to the results of a more conventional training-only approach. The applied learning seminar, with its focused and interactive nature, provides a valuable reiterative forum that helps concepts and ideas to sink in deeply.

I've also been encouraged by the increase in practical impact that training combined with applied learning seminars has created. Whereas much training falls down at the first hurdle if a person returns to the workplace and struggles to apply, let alone remember, what they have learned, the practical problem-solving focus of an applied learning seminar is often enough to both re-kickstart learning and convert it into action.

Practical advice for running applied learning seminars

If you have found the thoughts in this article helpful and decide to try out applied learning seminars as part of your own training programmes, Nick Wright recommends the following practical points.

- Organise and advertise applied learning seminars as an integral part of training events (for example: Part 1 = training, and Part 2 = applied learning seminar; Certificate of Attendance is only gained by participation in both parts).
- Where possible, involve the original trainer as consultant/facilitator for the applied learning seminar.
- Arrange for applied learning seminars to take place two to four weeks after the original training event (90-minutes duration minimum, half-day optimum).
- Ensure that the applied learning seminar retains an application-orientated, problem-solving focus.
- Run an additional (optional) applied learning seminar three months after the training event to review learning and revisit practice application.

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Learning management: HRMS or LMS?

David Wilson focuses on one of the thornier issues underlying the development of integrated people and learning processes: the need for an LMS when your HR management system says it manages learning.

Ever since Learning Management System (LMS) vendors became early active drivers of the e-learning market a few years ago, the possible need for an LMS has been a constant question for most large companies. Some organisations realise they cannot manage their overall learning provision better unless they can first understand what training and learning activity they are doing today. Others, driven by specific business projects, quickly find the need to automate the management and tracking processes associated with large-scale learning activities. Either way, the question of LMS comes up eventually.

To be truly effective, the management of learning ultimately needs to be integrated into other people-related processes – including people development, skills and competencies. As HR management systems (HRMS) increasingly provide functionality for managing training, organisations have become more confused about the role and overlap of the LMS versus the HRMS. This is a big question for any large company considering a corporate LMS. Answering the question is often a matter of organisational politics and funding as well as component functionality and scope.

> To be truly effective, the management of learning ultimately needs to be **integrated into other people-related processes**

My premise is that 'enterprise learning management' is a fundamental piece of the learning infrastructure jigsaw[1] for any major company going forward. This will include:

- management of all forms of learning – including classroom training, e-learning and self-paced learning
- management of both internal and external learning activities – including management, and control of budgets and costs
- self-service access for learners across the business, tailored to the specific needs of the business, the organisation and the learner
- automated administration, registration and approval processes
- automated tracking of all activities with comprehensive reporting
- integrated learning and development plans linked to competencies and skills
- customisable interfaces, business rules and processes, and
- integration with key financial, HR and collaboration systems.

By these standards, the historic training management functionality (focused on classroom training) offered by the primary HRMS products often proves to be inadequate. But justifying a large incremental expenditure on an enterprise LMS can also be problematic when the HR system says it already manages learning, and you've already invested a large amount of money adopting the HR system across the company. So what should you do if you're faced with this kind of consideration?

First, you need to realise that resolving this problem is an issue of corporate strategy as well as functional need. Even if you can present a clear case why your HRMS cannot currently deliver the LMS functionality you need, you still have to deal with the politics of making a non-strategic choice – assuming the HRMS is identified as strategic, that is! Many large LMS projects have foundered at this stage because a strong enough case wasn't made.

Second, you need to understand that the main HRMS providers are all making the justification of an incremental LMS harder. Both SAP and Oracle have released their own learning management components to complement their existing HR and training administration modules. In July 2002, PeopleSoft acquired the US LMS company Teamscape as a clear statement of intent to provide this capability as well. It may still be early days for them, but the addition of explicit LMS functionality within the integrated HR suite makes the HR director or CFO even more likely to try to hold firm.

But an integrated LMS and HRMS may not be the panacea for all. Short-term business projects may demand

> The main HRMS providers are all **making the justification** of an incremental LMS **harder**

LMS-capability faster than an integrated solution can provide it. Complex learning management needs, such as lots of blended delivery, or extensive use of virtual classrooms and other collaborative learning tools may also drive the need for complex LMS functionality, better delivered by a specialist LMS product. Both these scenarios are likely to lead to implementation of an LMS as a separate project. How tactical this is will ultimately depend on the ability of HRMS vendor to deliver a functionally competitive, integrated LMS solution. It will also be strongly influenced by the ability of the LMS vendor to remove the incremental cost of ownership, and to move you on to using even more sophisticated capabilities that cannot be replicated by the generalist products.

I strongly believe there is a long-term role for the LMS specialists, but if all you use is basic management of classroom training, and launch and track of e-learning content, the HRMS products will prove more than capable of doing that fairly quickly.

Reference

1. 'Enterprise Learning Management: LMS versus HRMS', eLearnity. 2002. The 90 page report is available from eLearnity at a cost of £249 plus VAT. Visit www.elearnity.com/leadership for more information and to order, or call 020 7917 1870.

Netcheck

Garry Platt gives us all a gentle reminder about the benefits of writing training objectives, and encourages us to look at three websites that will provide useful and related information.

I recently read a question that raised the issue of why we bother to write training objectives when designing or putting together some form of learning event. It was a good question and one that many trainers in our industry desperately try to ignore because, as a profession, we are so lax in the way we write and use them. The need for training objectives is very simple: they outline where you are going so that you know when you get there. Still not got it? Well, the purpose of training objectives is encapsulated in two words: 'definition' and 'direction'. 'Definition' is used in the sense of defining what the learner should be able to do at the end of the training, and 'direction' is used in terms of giving the design phase of the training a clear goal that it should seek to achieve.

Within the systematic training cycle the development and writing of objectives sits somewhere between the identification of training need and design of the learning event. Training objectives effectively act as a compass: they guide what we write within the context of what we are trying to achieve. For organisations, they also allow more than one trainer to deliver a training programme using their own style and approach but still achieving the same outcomes and results. This is accomplished because the trainers are working to the same set of objectives.

> As a profession, **we are so lax** in the way we write and use training objectives

Training objectives ensure standardisation of achievement over time. If the same training objectives stand over any given timescale and the training is delivered to achieve these objectives, we can say with some confidence that all those people who received the training reach the same minimum level of acceptable competence.

SMART objectives[1] – that is, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound – in relation to classroom or e-based training are not, err, well, very smart actually. SMART objectives lend themselves to coaching targets and career or job performance targets. Without doubt, the maestro of training-related objectives is Robert Mager, who developed and promoted one of the best systems for writing training objectives.[2] However, on the Internet there are several sites that will provide sufficient background and information to allow the trainer or educator to learn how to write training objectives. The first that I would like to highlight is actually two interlinked pages: www.adprima.com/objectives.htm and www.adprima.com/objectives2.htm

These are not visually stunning websites; they are, in fact, all but text documents with particular words that have been linked to other sites. Having said that, the content is top class and explains the key aspects of training objectives.

The first of these sites introduces the reader to the essential elements of training objectives or what is referred to as behavioural objectives. Don't worry about the name, it means the same thing. Dr Bob Kizlik, the author of the website's text, makes an important distinction between curriculum and instructional objectives. Curriculum objectives define those outcomes learners must achieve from which the trainer or instructor can make a reasonable assumption that they have acquired and retained the necessary skills and knowledge. Instructional objectives, on the other hand, define what the trainer will do in terms of the techniques and methods s/he will use in the design of the event. They are not the same and this latter form of objective is not what we are focusing on here.

The website goes on to describe the three essential elements present in any training-related objective – condition, behavioural verb and criteria. It explains that 'condition' refers to the environment, situation or circumstances under which the necessary skill or competence should be able to be practised. So, in simple terms, 'condition' boils down to 'Where?' and 'With what?'.

The 'behavioural verb', the next definition given, is relatively straightforward. It describes the action, behaviour or skill the individual should have acquired and be able to demonstrate as a result of the training. The site clearly shows that careful adherence to this avoids objectives that contain words like 'understand', 'be aware of' or 'become familiar with'. None of these phrases or words actually describes what the learner will physically do.

> Training objectives effectively act as a compass: they guide what we write within the context of **what we are trying to achieve**

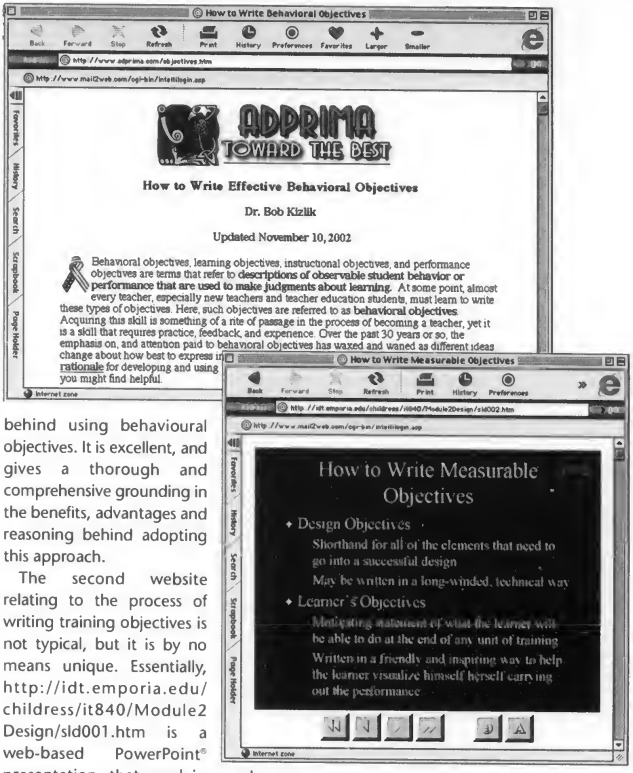
Once again, to reduce this to a simple definition there must be a description of an observable physical behaviour. There can be a problem here, and that is where the behaviour or action is very hard to reproduce in a training environment – and then 'inference' has to be employed. Trainers or instructors might have to infer or reason that they should be able to use the appropriate skills as and when needed.

An example could be when training flight cabin crew to handle drunk or violent passengers. This has to be simulated and from this simulation the instructor has to make a judgement about the learner's ability to transfer the learnt skills to the real situation. Similarly, emergency procedures are sometimes impossible to feasibly reproduce and inference might, again, play a role.

The final element that needs to be present in any training objective is the 'criteria'. The 'criteria' identifies the level or standard to which the behaviour should be demonstrated. Essentially, it is the pass or fail level for any skill being utilised. These three factors combined produce training or behavioural objectives.

The next part of the website, which is a larger section, provides the rationale

This month's 'Netcheck' is compiled by **Garry Platt**, a senior tutor at the Woodland Grange Management Centre in Leamington Spa, where he plays a key role in the Centre's provision of ongoing management training and development across the public and private sectors. If you think this edition of 'Netcheck' is good, bad, ugly or simply an affront to 10,000 years of human progress, do let Garry know at garry.platt@wgrange.com



behind using behavioural objectives. It is excellent, and gives a thorough and comprehensive grounding in the benefits, advantages and reasoning behind adopting this approach.

The second website relating to the process of writing training objectives is not typical, but it is by no means unique. Essentially, http://idt.emporia.edu/childress/it840/Module2Design/sld001.htm is a web-based PowerPoint® presentation that explains and goes through the process of writing up training or behavioural-based objectives. I find that some people are drawn more to learning this way by receiving the information in small chunks, which the PowerPoint format facilitates. But as well as delivering the same information in an alternative format, it also adds an additional part to the three elements already mentioned.

This fourth item is 'method of assessment'. Here, the extra requirement is to state what approach might be employed to check that the candidate has, indeed, learnt the new skills or knowledge. While it states that this requirement is one of Robert Mager's, in fact (as far as I know) it is not. Having said that, I would not be unhappy to see it as part of the standard training objective for any training event I was involved in.

The PowerPoint presentation also has some exercises that allow learners to check out their own understanding. For someone wanting to learn how to write behavioural or instructional objectives this is one excellent site. ***GP***

Ratings for www.adprima.com/objectives.htm and www.adprima.com/objectives2.htm

Content	★★★★★
Originality	★★★
Navigability	★★★★
Presentation and graphics	★
Downloads and freebies	★
Links	★★

Ratings for http://idt.emporia.edu/childress/it840/Module2Design/sld001.htm

Content	★★★★★
Originality	★★
Navigability	★★★★★
Presentation and graphics	★★★
Downloads and freebies	★
Links	★

References

1. SMART has already been addressed within *Training Journal*. See 'SMART objectives: what they mean and how to set them', August 2002, pp. 23–26. Alternatively, a synopsis of this article can be found at www.trainingjournal.co.uk/abstract/2002/0208platt.htm
2. See Robert F Mager's classic text, *Preparing Instructional Objectives*, David S Lake, 1984.

Many thanks to Garry Platt for this year's opening 'Netcheck'. Next month, we welcome back Clare Forrest, refreshed and rested after the festive season.

Quick hits

www.rdpslides.com/pptfaq/

★★★★

Love it or hate it, PowerPoint is here to stay. I have no doubt that many of us will have encountered our first near-death experience while watching some PowerPoint presentation that seemed to go on longer than Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. So if we are going to use this tool – and that is all it is – some research and background on what it can do and how it should be used would be useful. And this website is the mother-lode for this topic. If you've got a question concerning PowerPoint or some problem that you'd like resolved, I have no doubt you will find the answer here. You'll come across different sections that cover virtually everything you could ever want to know about PowerPoint.

www.sonlacoleman.com/Templates.htm

★★★★

If you want free templates (the pictures or graphics that appear in the background of your PowerPoint presentations), then this is a rich source for which you do not have to give up your first-born or, worse still, your e-mail address. There are 28 sets of templates with approximately six to ten templates per set. That's an average of 224 new backgrounds to play with, and they are good quality.

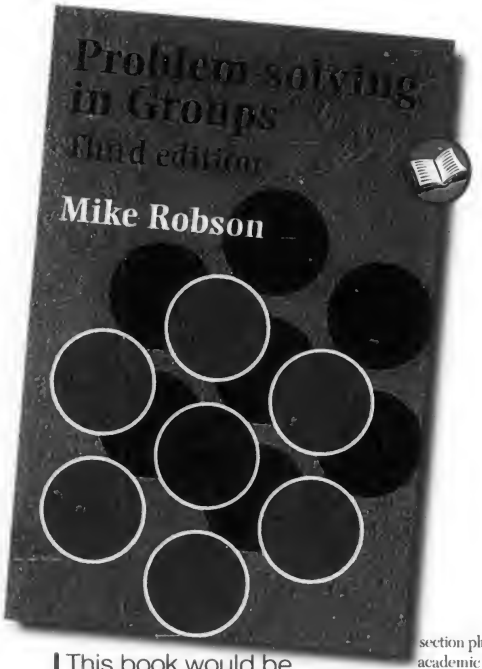
http://dgl.microsoft.com/

★★★★

Want some clip art for your next PowerPoint but can't find anything suitable? Go to Microsoft's own web resource, where it stores 100,000 pieces of clip art all for the searching and taking. Just enter a key word representing what you are looking for, hit return and hey presto! Something should turn up that you can use. This is a greatly under-utilised resource and a good one.

The reviews section

What do **sailing**, **organising your wardrobe** and **a pack of cards** have in common? Read this month's review offerings to find out.



Problem-solving in Groups (third edition)

Mike Robson
Gower Publishing Ltd
ISBN 0 566084 67 8
Paperback £25

This welcome third edition reinforces the excellence of the text and establishes it again as the authoritative source in the area. It is an A5 paperback of 163 pages, which contains a practical approach towards gaining knowledge and the application of the subject.

The book is in four parts – 'Introduction', 'Problem-solving techniques', 'Following through' and 'Working effectively in groups'. Recognition that the quality of decisions made in a group is invariably better than the decision of an individual is a theme that many managers would do well to remember. Yet the subject area often needs re-enforcement and the drift towards the short-term authoritarian management style is prevalent despite the underpinning knowledge published and taught.

> This book would be **an asset** to any manager's library and knowledge system

The author provides the reader with the tools and techniques to make the process transparent and effective. The overall process remains the same as that published in the earlier editions. However, the examples in the text have been updated to reflect the changes in the business world, and there are new sections on virtual teams and facilitation in groups, thus recognising the ever-increasing importance of both.

There is a logical easy-to-follow contents section plus an index, which is not highly academic but is utilitarian and highly practical. The book is easy to read with headings and a sequential approach. This classic text recognises this important management skill and is a super reference document. The new section on virtual teams (Part 1, page 19) recognises the trust issues, and makes a clear and important contribution to the debate.

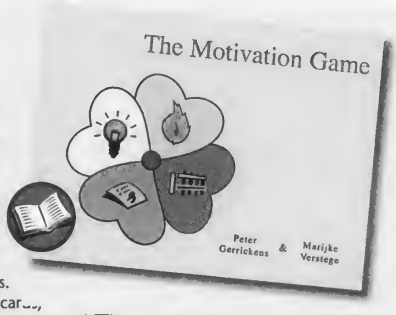
The general style is comfortable and easy to follow, justifying an overall confidence and quality of delivery. This book would be an asset to any manager's library and knowledge system. ***SJH***

Ratings	
Innovation	★★★★
Readability	★★★★★
Clarity	★★★★★
Usability	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★

The Motivation Game

Peter Gerrickens and Marijke Verstege

Gower Publishing Ltd
ISBN 0 566085 19 4
A5 booklet manual and pack of games cards £49.50



This translated resource, originally published earlier in 2002 in the Netherlands, consists of a pack of motivation games cards with a supporting manual, the kit designed to help learners to motivate themselves and others.

The card packs contain 140 cards, divided into four sets. The sets are intended to help people identify what they enjoy doing, from where they get their inspiration, what they need to do to work enjoyably and effectively, and how they can clear their own obstructive hang-ups.

> These activities will be useful to any trainer in a wide range of training events **involving motivation**

The manual suggests how the cards might be used in 22 different activities, such as 'Activities for our team', 'My dream job', 'Role profiling', 'Motivation to learn', 'The motivation matrix', 'Barriers to me', 'Activities and obstacles', 'Activities and inspirations' and 'The motivation window'.

Following an introduction to the cards and the models/theories behind them (for example, those of Maslow), the activities are described in terms of their purpose, preparation, resources required and the method of playing, plus alternative versions. The number of possible participants ranges from one to a maximum of 25, via a variety of combinations. The time required for the activities ranges from 30 minutes to 3 hours.

This game, focusing on what you might want from work and life, follows on from The Feedback Game ('Who I am') and The Development Game ('What I can do'), which were published prior to this kit. It is an imaginative, innovative and enjoyable method of providing activities for the purposes described earlier. The cards are made of a very durable material and will therefore be long-lasting. The activities in the kit will be useful to any trainer in a wide range of training events involving the motivation of self and others. It is a deceptively simple tool for exploring fundamental ideas at the heart of performance and performance management at an individual level, in group and team development, and one-to-one coaching. Highly recommended. ***LR***

Ratings	
Clearly defined learning objectives	★★★★★
Variety and approach	★★★★★
Trainer guidance	★★★★★
Clarity	★★★★★
Usability	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★

Ratings	
Outstanding	★★★★★
Very good	★★★★
Good	★★★
Adequate	★★
Poor	★

Your reviewers ...

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Inspiring Leadership: Staying Afloat in Turbulent Times

Jane Cranwell-Ward, Andrea Bacon and Rosie Mackie
Thomson Learning
ISBN 1 861529 82 1
Paperback £19.99

The best leadership studies are based on real-life examples. The authors of this 438-page book have used the BT Global Challenge 2000/01 round-the-world yacht race as their context for investigating leadership skills. They attempt to identify the key attributes and skills that make effective leaders stand out from the crowd, and to demonstrate how Emotional Intelligence can be developed to impact on performance.

The first part of the book sets the scene, describing the background to the yacht race, with details of the 12 identical boats, the route and how the crews were selected. It also provides an overview of modern leadership theories in the business context, with a comprehensive literature survey.

The second part discusses the rationale and methodology for the research and summarises the key findings. These show the personal, managerial and leadership skills of the 12 skippers (selected from 186 applicants), how Emotional Intelligence enabled them to apply these skills, and what made the difference between high and low performers in the race.

Next comes 'Key business issues' – the third and longest part of the book, with seven stand-alone chapters. Each chapter discusses an issue facing business leaders, makes parallels between the race and business practice, and ends with a boxed summary of lessons for leaders. The authors discuss at length the use by the skippers of the four main leadership styles of directing, delegating, coaching and supporting, and the relevance of each style in specific situations. The fourth part, 'A great place to be', draws together the lessons from the book and explains how to apply them to create a team culture. The final part provides a summary of the key lessons and a compilation of them for future reference. There are three appendices containing technical information about the yachts and their crews, and a glossary of nautical terms.

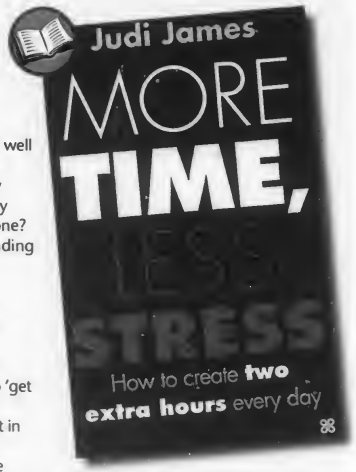
> This title combines the best elements of a management textbook and **a gripping yarn**

This is an excellent case study. The BT Global Challenge yacht race took nine months, plus several months' preparation, during which the crews had to be selected, trained, motivated and, especially, led. It was the ultimate experiential learning situation, and it allowed the authors of this book to conduct an extensive investigation into what makes an effective leader. They have transferred the research findings into the business context very effectively, and place great importance on the relationship between leadership skills and Emotional Intelligence. Most readers will find parallels with their own work situation. On top of that, the descriptions of the physical and mental challenges faced by the skippers and crews make exciting reading, so this title combines the best elements of a management textbook and a gripping yarn. ***DS***

Ratings	
Content	★★★★★
Clarity	★★★★
Innovation	★★★
Value	★★★★
Overall recommendation	★★★★

More time, less stress: How to create two extra hours every day

Judi James
Piatkus Books
ISBN 0 749923 60 1
Paperback £9.99



With a title like this you may well be intrigued (if not a little cynical), but with so many books on time management currently available, why do we need another one? Well, this book is actually worth spending time on.

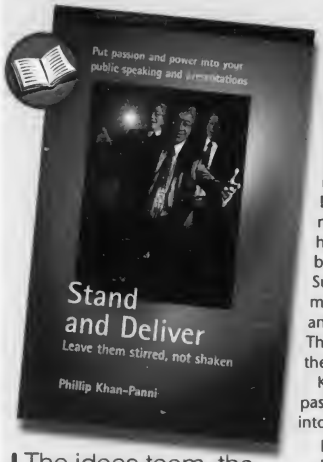
It's rare that any publication on 'improving efficiency at work' would actually be enjoyable to read. But this particular one practically sizzles with enthusiasm. Like the programme *Life Laundry* on BBC2, it exhorts readers to 'get rid of the clutter, ruthlessly prune out anything that isn't essential, and invest in organised storage for what you really need'. The author takes a no-nonsense approach (anticipating objections), and the book is full of good advice. I couldn't find fault with any of it, except that if you're one of the people who most needs this advice, whose life is crammed full to bursting to the extent that you're on the verge of collapse, you won't have time to invest in taking stock of what you could do to sort out the mess!

> The author takes a **no-nonsense approach** and the book is full of good advice

The book is primarily aimed at office workers (it assumes you work at a desk) and people with some degree of autonomy or control over their working day. However, it does cover life outside of work as well, including organising your wardrobe, shopping and travel. The publication has a serious aspect, too: stress is such a major cause of illness, at work and at home, and the pressures so many people experience due to stress can be alleviated or eliminated if you have strategies to deal with the causes.

Whether you do actually create two extra hours every day depends on how much control you have over your job – and, of course, whether you apply the advice in this book! ***AM***

Ratings	
Content	★★★★
Readability	★★★★★
Universal practicality	★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall recommendation	★★★★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Phillip Khan-Panni

Stand and Deliver: Leave them stirred, not shaken

Phillip Khan-Panni
How To Books Ltd
ISBN 1 85703 781 2
Paperback £6.99

I approached this book somewhat reluctantly having read the statement: 'Phillip Khan-Panni is regarded as the foremost authority in Britain on effective communication.' This may be true, but as I had never heard of him it left me feeling somewhere between disbelieving and uninformed. Such can be the adverse power of the marketing quote. However, I persevered and found that his book is worth reading. The author's track record as presented in the book is impressive.

Khan-Panni writes with power and passion about putting power and passion into your public speaking and presentations. The style is an eclectic mix of anecdotes, core messages, theories, clichés and personal beliefs. The total effect, however, is both informative and very convincing.

> The ideas teem, the pace is fast and, above all, **the writer has been there, got it wrong, worked out why** and moved on

It is not that Khan-Panni says a lot which is absolutely new to anyone who has made some presentations and agonised over speeches. It is that what he says is so interestingly presented and often explores an obvious point from an unfamiliar angle. For example, I love the quote: 'They are not really speeches but rather, scripts thrown at the audience.' There are many other one-line quotes which stay with me usefully after completing the book.

This is not a long book – 144 pages in all, divided into 12 short chapters. Each chapter starts with a brief statement of content and ends with a bullet point summary of actions to take to implement the suggestions, instructions and advice within it.

All the usual 'stuff' of preparation, knowing your audience, limiting your messages and presenting yourself effectively is covered, but so too are fascinating aspects such as the language you use (Chapter 7), improving the way you sound (Chapter 8), and gestures and movement (Chapter 12). By the way, picking out these three chapters does not mean the others are of lesser importance, but these three had some particular resonance and some useful learning points for me.

It happens rarely that I approach a book reluctantly and find myself so taken with it that I finish it in one sitting. The ideas teem, the pace is fast and, above all, the writer has been there, got it wrong, worked out why and moved on. A useful and interesting book for anyone who wants to improve his/her public speaking, presentation or indeed training skills. ***DB***

Ratings

Innovation	★★★
Readability	★★★★
Clarity	★★★★★
Usability	★★★★
Value	★★★★

Coaching in a Week

Matt Somers
Hodder & Stoughton Educational
ISBN 0 340804 92 0
Paperback £6.99

Are you blown away by all the books and articles currently being written about coaching? Matt Somers provides a concise and succinct overview of how coaching raises the level of human performance.

The author focuses on the essence of coaching and confines it to two main facets: performance focus (helping individuals to perform tasks to the best of their ability) and being person-centred (in other words, the coachee has the important insights). The book focuses on a fundamental element of coaching – that is, drawing out of the individual, rather than putting in.

Coaching in a Week enables the reader to cover a subject each day. Once the reader begins to develop an approach to coaching, his/her understanding is developed further through the week by adding practical skills in order to become an excellent coach. The day-by-day breakdown begins with Sunday: 'Introduction to coaching – a coaching philosophy'. It then progresses with 'The manager as coach – communicating for development' (Monday), 'The key principles of coaching – awareness, responsibility and trust' (Tuesday), 'The coaching ARROW, part 1 – understanding where we are going' (Wednesday), 'The coaching ARROW, part 2 – deciding how to get there' (Thursday), 'Coaching in context – putting it into practice' (Friday), and 'Coaching in organizations – the business case for coaching skills' (Saturday).

The book clearly highlights key learning points, specific issues to be discussed and questioning techniques. Cartoons are used to aid learning and add humour. The coaching model used in Matt's book is the ARROW (Aims, Reality, Reflection, Options, Way forward) model. This provides a simple framework around which to construct the coaching questions, which are the all-important tools to tap into the huge reserves of talent and potential laying dormant in most people. Case studies are also used to exemplify certain issues to the reader.

> This book ensures **a credible appreciation of coaching** for anyone who is looking to understand what coaching is all about

This book ensures a credible appreciation of coaching for anyone who is looking to understand what coaching is all about. At the same time it can be used as a great aide-memoire for those wishing to reinforce their existing knowledge of coaching. ***AK***

Ratings

Innovation	★★
Universal practicality	★★★
Clarity	★★★
Usability	★★★★
Value	★★★

New appointments

A regular look at **key personnel changes** within the world of training.

New sales team leads with top 'Marks'

Tony Marks

Worldwide Learning, the corporate education arm of News International, has strengthened the structure of its business development team with two new recruits who will help the company as it continues to build on the success of its recent reseller campaign as well as developing strong new business leads.

Previously chief executive of leading independent management research organisation Business Lab, Tony Marks co-founded the Aberdeen-based company and helped it to bridge a gap, uniting academia, technology and learning by creating a 'laboratory environment' in which a creative approach is taken in the development of businesses. Tony joins the Worldwide Learning team in a new full-time role as business development director. Commenting on his decision to join the team, he says: 'Through Business Lab, I have enjoyed an interesting and productive working relationship with Worldwide Learning for some time. As I have first-hand experience of the company's huge potential, I expect to play a leading part in its future growth.'

The company also welcomes Anna Ejobe as business development co-ordinator to provide support and co-ordination services and assist in the delivery of sales. Anna is looking forward to working in a fast-paced department: 'There is a lot of energy and enthusiasm on the team as well as a strong focus. It's good to be part of a working environment that is so challenging and dynamic.'

John Trasler, Worldwide Learning's managing director, is confident that the appointments will help the company to capitalise on growing interests from customers in the UK and abroad: 'It's great to see the team growing with such significant new appointments. Both Tony and Anna are committed business professionals who have a lot to offer Worldwide Learning, and we look forward to seeing positive results in the coming months.'

New appointment for BrightWave

Lars Highland

Lars Highland has been appointed by Brighton e-Learning company BrightWave as director of Learning Services. Lars, who has been a leading figure within the UK and European e-learning industry over the past 12 years, will also strengthen BrightWave's consultative approach, building strategic relationships with organisations at a senior level.

He will work on positioning the company as the premium e-learning consultancy and content production service within the UK and Europe, leveraging its already significant pool of talent and experience.

'In my experience, customers buying e-learning solutions value knowledgeable suppliers,' he says. 'Achieving a successful implementation is a complex process, so experience and an open, collaborative approach counts for a great deal. BrightWave has an exceptionally talented team and takes this to a new level.'

Lars has worked with a wide range of organisations including The Royal Bank of Scotland, American Express, British Airways, Goldman Sachs, BOC Group, European Space Agency, BUPA Healthcare and BT. He was previously key accounts director at Epic plc.

Exciting development for WSE Group

'Looking forward to the challenge of combining the classroom with the "grassroom" creating innovative solutions to age-old training and personal development problems', is how Annie Raven-Vause described her feelings about joining WSE Group. Annie has been a partner in WSE Group for many years, but until now has forged an independent career in private and public sector healthcare, developing extensive experience in leadership, team development and organisational change.

Explaining WSE Group's development strategy, Francis Raven-Vause, senior partner and Annie's husband, views Annie's skills as complementary to those of other experienced associates on the WSE team.

Communispond, recently purchased by IIR-Global, appoints a business development director

Annette Kurer

Annette Kurer has been appointed as business development director with Communispond, recently purchased by IIR-Global, international knowledge and skills transfer company. Annette brings with her an extensive knowledge of sales and marketing and managing businesses, along with experience in account management.

Annette began her career by qualifying as a dentist and working in general dental practice. She then spent three years at Pearl & Dean Publishing as its international sales and marketing manager, working on trade publications for the international tax and duty free marketplace. Following that she joined Unilever Cosmetics International, where she worked as sales director in more than 20 countries.

In 2001, Annette qualified as a life coach and last year she qualified as a corporate coach with the UK College of Life Coaching.

Says Annette: 'Having been responsible for the success of multimillion pound international businesses achieved by working with different functional units, I can fully embrace the importance of developing communication skills at all levels of the organisation. For me, coaching is the perfect methodology for people to

learn these skills. Clients attending the Communispond programmes learn how to use these skills and relate them to their own workplace. They leave the training sessions owning their new skills, able to use them and can immediately impact on their productivity back in their own companies. With IIR-Global's commitment to support the growth of Communispond it is a very exciting time for me to be involved in the expansion of the Communispond business in Europe.'

Ex-IBM boss joins Fox IT board of directors to drive expansion in IT services sector

IT services and IT training supplier, Fox IT, has announced a restructure of the company's board of directors with two new senior appointments. Nick Temple, former chairman of IBM UK, has been appointed as the chairman of Fox IT. Nick's long-standing experience at the helm of IBM UK will help to enhance and develop Fox IT's strategic direction and positioning in the IT services market.

Says Nick: 'I am delighted to be involved with Fox IT at this important stage in its development. This is an exciting opportunity to enhance the company's significant potential to be a market leader in IT services.'

In addition, David Harland, a highly successful businessman, has been appointed as chief executive. Over the last 25 years, David has been chairman, CEO and director of a wide variety of high profile businesses in both the private and public sectors.

Both men have been working with Fox IT shareholders recently on new expansion plans for the business, which have been backed by an increased investment of £2 million by West Private Equity (a subsidiary of West LB) and Indigo Capital.

Epic expands Services division

Epic Group plc, the UK's leading e-learning company, has launched its new Services division with the appointment of Paul Peplow in the newly created post of director of Services. The move builds on the existing success of Epic's consultancy, collaborative support, hosting and testing business – widening the range of services offered to include e-tutoring and face-to-face training. Through this move, Epic enhances its ability to offer clients a full range of services to support performance improvement through learning.

Paul brings a wealth of experience to his new role. Previously a UK managing director of Europe's largest training organisation, he has also held commercial and training responsibilities in leading blue-chip multinationals in financial, FMCG and pharmaceutical sectors (including Diageo, GlaxoSmithKline, Lloyds TSB and NatWest). His brief is to take control of the current services and shape the expanded offering.

Donald Clark, CEO of Epic Group plc, comments, 'This is a natural step for Epic. We have successfully expanded our business into products in response to real customer demand. As the e-learning market matures, we have responded by increasing our learning services. Customers want more sophisticated services. They want integrated solutions.'

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'I am your business partner?'

Andrew Mayo is a consultant, speaker, writer and facilitator in international HR management, with specialisms in people and organisation development. He can be contacted on 01727 843424, at andrew@mliltd.com or at www.mliltd.com

In his first column of the new year, **Andrew Mayo** sets a challenge for the coming 12 months regarding learning interventions and the differences they could make.

Dave Ulrich has a lot to answer for. Just as Peter Senge put the (already existing) concept of the learning organisation on the world map,[1] Ulrich has done the same through his description of the 'strategic partnership' of HRM,[2] and making this a reality seems to be the mantra of HR functions everywhere. The first thing to be said is that Ulrich made it clear that this was only *one* of HR's contributions, and that providing other services were just as important. Second, there seems to be some uncertainty as to how exactly HR professionals establish this new role other than changing titles on the organisation chart. ('Partnership' implies a two-way wish for a common goal; sometimes this looks somewhat unilateral on behalf of the HR function.) And third, what does this mean for the HR *development* professional?

The capability of people has always been fundamental to the achievement of business and organisational goals, and yet I rarely find organisations with a clear process for deriving organisational and individual goals from them. This is one reason why the subsequent evaluation can be difficult. Paul Kearns would argue, as he did in *Training Journal* in July 2002 that, unless there is a direct link between training and at least a 1 per cent change in the bottom line benefit, the training is not worth doing.[3]

> The **level of understanding** of basic financial parameters **is, frankly, appalling!**

I take a different view – I hope not any less business-orientated – that seeing the only benefits in profits, or cost reduction, is a limited and short-term view of what an organisation exists for. All organisations exist to add value – both financial and non-financial – to their stakeholders. Those stakeholders decide whether to continue their association with us based on the value we provide. So the question for me is, to what extent will this training lead to increased *value* for one or more stakeholders? And that includes employees in their own right. Losing good people is, after all, one of the great unrecorded costs of organisations.

So the starting point of business partnerships for HRD is to be *business-issue* centred, rather than *solution* centred ('I've got some great training to offer'). That does imply a credible understanding of what the organisation is about, what its people do and what counts to its customers. It means being able to ask the right questions, which will lead to the individuals or groups whose capability will be critical to success. This is not the same as Training Needs Analysis, which often starts with the individual employee (and may be done as well). This is a process that begins with what is on the objectives and targets of a manager or business unit.

Then we do need a disciplined process of evaluation, and this will include the ability to calculate a return on investment, where appropriate. This is where Paul Kearns provides excellent guidance[4] and all trainers should be familiar with his, or a similar, methodology. I provide a simple exercise on calculation to delegates on a training and development strategy event I run, and I have to say the level of understanding of basic financial parameters is, frankly, appalling! Trainers and developers should not only be prepared to answer questions about cost benefit, but also surely the business partner would take the initiative to make management aware of the effects of their interventions on a regular basis. One of my MAHRM students has been researching this in a company and has found a great lack of interest in evaluation, as if 'training is a necessary cost, and that's that!'. Such disinterest needs to be turned into a positive realisation of benefits.

If we think of organisational development, there are some significant professional contributions to be made to improve effectiveness. What does it mean to create a high performance environment (a common mantra for today)? It is much more than managing the interpersonal interaction of performance discussions. How do we make the values of the organisation live vibrantly in everything people do and create? How do we create a knowledge-sharing culture and help people to transfer learning across organisational boundaries? Can we reduce the impact of organisational boundaries generally (the unhealthy side effects of hierarchy, the competition between departments, the island mentality of distant operations, the politics that people inevitably play)? Incidentally, I found a book called *The Boundaryless Organisation* very helpful here.[5]

> I would suggest that in HRD – on average – we have become ***too*** **people orientated**

The scope for strategic partnership is deep and wide. It sounds a strange thing to say, but I would suggest that in HRD – on average – we have become *too* people orientated. Our legitimate concern with developing personal behaviours and team harmony must be balanced with the – for many – less exciting and less interesting areas of organisational effectiveness. So here is the challenge for 2003. Will you be able to say, at the end of the year, where and how learning interventions made a difference to the achievements of the organisation(s) you work with – *in terms that the managers would use?* There is no shortage of opportunities to do precisely that.

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3. Paul Kearns, 'The purpose of training: an assessment', *Training Journal*, July 2002, pp. 12–16.
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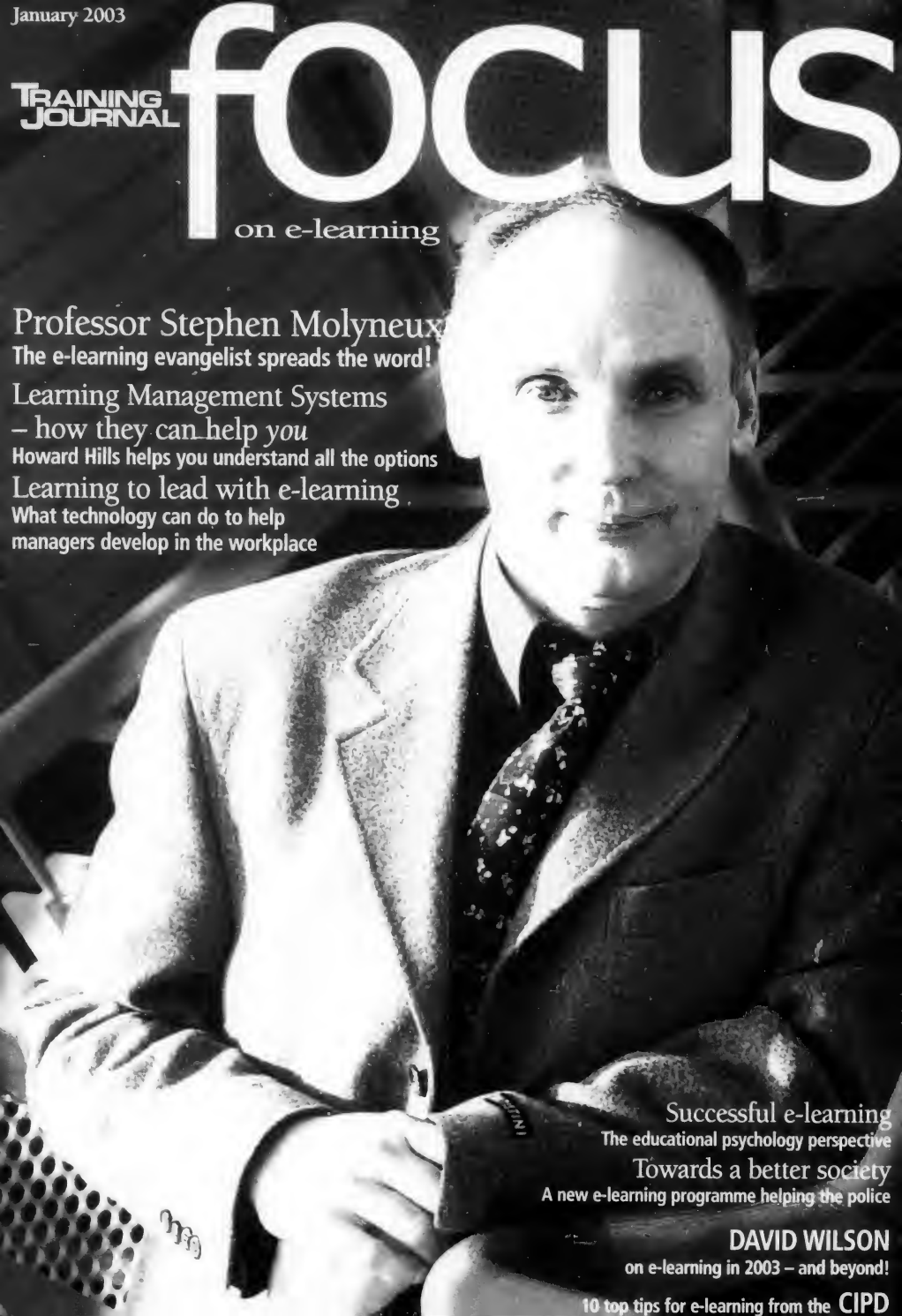
January 2003

TRAINING JOURNAL

focus

on e-learning



Professor Stephen Molyneux
The e-learning evangelist spreads the word!

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Howard Hills helps you understand all the options

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What technology can do to help managers develop in the workplace

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DAVID WILSON
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editorial

Welcome ... to the second issue of *Focus*. This edition concentrates on the slightly controversial area of e-learning. Love it or hate it, I am afraid it's not going to disappear. In fact, organisations that do not embrace it at some level are likely to lose out in the competitive stakes to those that do use it to solve some of their specific training needs.

I have noticed a change over the past year or so in the declarations being made by the e-learning advocates away from 'e' being the only training intervention to the more pragmatic approach of the 'blended' solution – one that incorporates technology into a range of solutions to provide the right results.

Focus is delighted to feature an interview with Professor Stephen Molyneux, a champion of e-learning in its most broad sense. Turn to page 8 to find out more. Meanwhile, Howard Hills provides some practical advice on Learning Management Systems (LMSs). In part 1 of three articles exploring this important area, he helps you to understand why you might need an LMS (see page 12). (Incidentally, parts 2 and 3 will appear in the February and March 2003 issues of *Training Journal*.) Our 'Final word' comes from David Wilson, our own specialist *TJ* columnist on all things 'e'. Turn to page 24 to find out what he forecasts for the future.

Happy reading!

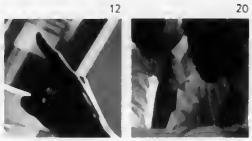
Debbie Carter

EDITOR

PS The next *Focus* will arrive with your April 2003 issue of *Training Journal*.

Debbie Carter
Sheryl Kent
Mike Stapleton
Stephen McMaugh

Michael Herbert
Sarah Perito



Up

The latest news on recruitment, employability, training, life planning & achievements

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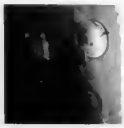

RMC supports e-learning SAP roll-out

Intellexis has signed a one-year licence agreement with RMC Group, an international producer and supplier of materials, products and services to the construction industry.

The agreement enables financial e-learning courses from Intellexis to be used in support of RMC's enterprise-wide roll-out of SAP in the UK. 'We believe that training our management staff in the fundamental principles of finance is an essential part of our SAP implementation,' comments Alan Vaughan, RMC's UK head of Training.

The online learning will be supported by a series of classroom-based workshops designed to help relate the learning to the participants' own working environment within RMC.

For further information contact Richard Allen on 020 7737 4444 or visit www.intellexis.com

CIPD refines online learning with new programmes

The popularity of online learning has prompted the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) to launch two new certificates delivered totally online – including an advanced programme for people who teach or train online themselves.

The Advanced Certificate in Online Learning has been developed as a result of the success of the CIPD's Certificate in Online Learning, which was launched last year. 'The course is for training professionals who have some familiarity with online learning but who want to progress and gain some hands-on experience of planning and implementing their own online learning projects,' says Karen Ver, e-learning business manager.

Every student who took this programme singled out the exceptional level of tutor support, as well as the quality of online materials. They said they found collaborating with other learners – a trademark of the CIPD's online programmes – 'invaluable'. The Advanced Certificate builds on this highly successful online learning approach and format.

The second addition to the CIPD's growing stable of online qualifications is the Certificate in Management, a flexible programme accredited by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. The new qualification reflects the demand for training that is more closely linked to organisations' business objectives, with managers expected to know about IT and finance as well as having superb interpersonal skills.

Every student who took this programme singled out the exceptional level of tutor support, as well as the quality of online materials

date

Caroline Curtis, head of the CIPD's training division, says managers would appreciate being able to decide when they studied. 'Because they don't have to be absent from work, they can apply their learning to solving current day-to-day problems and issues as they progress through the modules.'

For further information on the new certificate programmes contact 020 8263 3434 or visit www.cipd.co.uk/training

New website from Edexcel

A recently launched website by awarding body Edexcel has recorded a massive two million hits in the first two weeks since it went live, with 26,000 users making 80,000 visits, downloading over 200,000 documents.

The largest section, covering every Edexcel qualification, can be searched by qualification type, subject or keyword. All information relating to a qualification is linked, allowing teachers and trainers to refer to course content, identify teaching resources, check training days, confirm exam dates and catch up on the latest developments within a few clicks.

Navigation and search facilities include a What's New button on each page, enabling users to find out immediately what has been newly posted on the site. Another button gives instant access to crucial dates and deadlines. A feedback address enables users to let Edexcel know their views on the changes.

For further information visit www.edexcel.org.uk/international

Epic makes the Heartbeat faster

Epic Group plc has created a high quality online programme for BUPA in record time. From initial meeting to delivery, including testing, the global health and care organisation's first foray into e-learning took fewer than five weeks to produce.

> Epic was able to turn our brief round in record time and we are delighted with the work it has done for us

Heartbeat Product Knowledge is part of a blended learning programme that aims to provide the sales and customer care departments of BUPA UK insurance business with the appropriate product knowledge to deliver the 'Heartbeat' personal health plan, an umbrella brand for a range of medical insurance options aimed at the personal market.

The tight timescale was required in order to prepare customer-facing staff for a launch-to-market in early November. Factors enabling Epic to meet the deadline were good relations with the client and Epic's processes, developed during 18 years of operation.

The design for the programme was produced (literally) overnight. Initial storyboarding of the content, something that would ordinarily take between six and seven days, was accomplished in two, with the client onsite at Epic. Time was further saved throughout the project through online collaborative working based around ECHO, Epic's extranet facility for clients. Additionally, Epic's proprietary production methodology, CONSTRUCT, cut time in production through use of a template-driven script-to-screen methodology.

Phil Knight, BUPA head of Training and Development, UK Membership, says: 'One of the critical success factors for the launch of our new BUPA Heartbeat options is ensuring that our people are familiar with every element of the new schemes. This was a complicated exercise, because we are introducing five new options to our personal health plan, all of which need to be individually tailored to each person's needs and circumstances. Epic gave us the opportunity to do this using e-learning, an innovative and creative approach that makes it much easier for people to absorb information. Epic was able to turn our brief round in record time and we are delighted with the work it has done for us.'

For further information contact John Helmer on 01273 728686, at johnhe@epic.co.uk or visit www.epic.co.uk

Joint marketing initiative for leading e-learning developer

One of Europe's leading e-learning and communications solutions developers, LINE Communications Group, has announced a joint marketing initiative with Ten Alps Events, a division of Ten Alps Communications plc – the AIM-listed media production and corporate brand management company co-founded by Sir Bob Geldof.

LINE will provide interactive media consultancy and development as part of Ten Alps' service to its blue chip clients. Meanwhile, Ten Alps Events will provide live event and broadcast capabilities as part of LINE's service to its own clients. In both cases the services will be optional add-ins for clients.

'Companies are increasingly looking for a one-stop solution through which they can directly reach the precise audience they are targeting,' says LINE chairman Ian Philion. 'They can invite the audience to an offline event such as a sales conference that Ten Alps might produce. Or they can put in place online activities such as a conference programme hosted on wireless handheld devices, which is LINE's expertise. Why not put it all together?'

Says Ten Alps' communications chief executive Alex Connock: 'Most corporate events aim to transmit "takeaway" information to the audience. But we find people sometimes resent carrying around heavy and quite naff plastic conference bags. Equally, once out of the conference there is no guarantee that delegates will even refer to the material. So one of the key tools before, during and after events is the online or e-learning delivery of key messages. That's one reason why LINE and Ten Alps will work so well together.'

The agreement between Ten Alps and LINE is to explore for one year on a non-exclusive basis opportunities to cross-sell services between the two companies' clients.

Sir Bob Geldof comments: 'This is a great piece of the jigsaw in our offer of bringing brands to life. Now we have an even wider communication network to help clients deliver their messages.'

For further information visit www.LINE.co.uk or www.tenalps.com

> The agreement is to explore on a non-exclusive basis opportunities to cross-sell services between the two companies' clients

Two companies join forces to launch new training portal

Wilco International, developer and supplier of financial software systems, and the training specialist OP&S, have allied to research, design, develop and deliver an online training facility. Wilco International is a wholly owned subsidiary of Automatic Data Processing.

The two companies have been working together for some years in a traditional supplier/client relationship to develop Wilco's own in-house training and CBT solutions. More recently OP&S and Wilco have begun development of a 'virtual university' to deliver, in the first phase, training for Wilco's Gloss product range, which will be accessible online to clients worldwide. Second-phase roll-out will include several additional training titles – including management and personal development skills courseware.

Designed to provide users with product information, software updates and online training modules, the site will offer access to trainers where required. Available through either annual subscription or on a pay-as-you-go basis, the virtual university will provide easy access both for the corporate buyer and for those individuals wishing to add to their personal skills.

For further information visit www.wilco-int.com or www.ops-ltd.uk

> The virtual university will provide easy access both for the corporate buyer and for those individuals wishing to add to their personal skills

Scotland targeted in new e-learning industry survey

A brand new report entitled 'eLearning in Scotland: an economic report on eLearning in Scotland' has just been published by the eLearning Alliance. The report is an amalgamation of statistics from the alliance members and personal interviews with leading industry figures.

To obtain a copy of the report or to find out more about the eLearning Alliance, e-mail info@elearningalliance.org or visit www.elearningalliance.org

Educational

takes us through a brief history of cognitive psychology and its influence on training and education in order to throw some light on how we can improve the process of e-learning.

psychology
and the nature of e-learning

Charles Low is director of educational psychology at **fuel**, the bespoke e-learning content specialists. He is responsible for consulting with clients to ensure that e-learning content is developed to deliver maximum learning effectiveness as well as researching and developing innovative learning techniques and programmes. Charles can be contacted on 020 7554 2200, at charlesl@fuel-europe.com or visit www.fuel-europe.com

IN 1922, THOMAS EDISON SAID: 'The motion picture is destined to revolutionise our educational system.' He is just one in a long line of prophets of technology that clearly missed the mark. The latest revolution is the Internet and the flag carrier for education here is e-learning. But once again there is a breakdown between the evangelist's heady claims and the more mundane experiences of learners. Why is this? Before we try to answer the question, here's a story I heard recently …

A university lecturer walked into the large theatre where he was to give his lecture. There were only five students scattered around the banked seats, but he switched on the overhead projector and started to deliver his notes. After an hour he was down to two students, and with 15 minutes of the lecture remaining, the hall was empty. Dutiful to the end, he continued until the hour was up. Recounting the story in the staff room later, he proudly concluded: 'And I'm bang on track to complete this module by the end of the month!'

It's not too hard to draw parallels with a lot of learning: dutiful, comprehensive but deadly dull, and clearly not meeting the learning needs of anyone. To understand why so much e-learning fits into this mould we need a whirlwind tour of the history of cognitive psychology and its influence on training and education.

SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

The dominant school of thought for the first two-thirds of the 20th century was behaviourism. Behaviourism took the black box approach to learning; you could measure what went in and what came out, and what happened in the middle was considered at best irrelevant or at worst non-existent. It was the basis of psychologist BF Skinner's[1] famous 'teaching machines' with their programmed stimulus-response-feedback approach.

But no one talked about 'drill and thrill'! As psychologists decided that applying the behavioural patterns of pigeons to humans had its weaknesses, a new model emerged. The 1950s and 60s saw the development of instructivism and the information processing model, where the human mind (people had minds again) was compared to a computer.

This became the prevailing paradigm and led to a new quest for a scientifically based template for developing instructional materials, perhaps best embodied in the work of psychologist Robert Gagné who wrote *The Conditions of Learning*.[2] This work specified nine instructional steps to be followed for successful learning to happen. It is still the predominant model when it comes to most technology-based (and a lot of classroom-based) training – and e-learning is no exception.

There are many positive outcomes from these decades of research. The use of feedback, the design of learning programmes aligned to specified learning objectives, taking a more systematic approach to structuring the flow of learning programmes and developing assessment strategies in accordance with the objectives of a course are a few examples. But they do suffer from a tendency to mechanistic application: follow these rules and you will have a successful piece of learning. This isn't the case.

The most recent thinking in cognitive psychology places the individual firmly at the centre of the learning experience

More importantly, these models tend to regard the individual as an 'empty vessel' into which knowledge is poured. The instructional designer knows what is best for the learner to know, the best path to learn it, the best way to learn it. They are teacher-centric. What this can result in, and all too often does, is dry, unengaging learning that, as the lecturer in the earlier story found out, leaves the room empty. ▶▶

Education

Charles Low takes us through a brief history of cognitive psychology and its influence on training and education in order to throw some light on how we can improve the process of e-learning.

psychology

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A university lecturer walked into the large theatre where he was to give his lecture. There were only five students scattered around the banked seats, but he switched on the overhead projector and started to deliver his notes. After half an hour he was down to two students, and with 15 minutes of the lecture remaining, the hall was empty. Dutiful to the end, he continued until the hour was up. Recounting the story in the staff room later, he proudly concluded: 'And I'm bang on track to complete this module by the end of the month!'

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This became the prevailing paradigm and led to a new quest for a scientifically based template for developing instructional materials, perhaps best embodied in the work of psychologist Robert Gagne who wrote *The Conditions of Learning*. This work specified nine instructional steps to be followed for successful learning to happen. It is still the guiding principal behind most of what comes to most of us as 'skills-based' training – the kind of classroom based 'training' we [illegible] are so keen to get away from.

There are many positive outcomes from these decades of research. The use of feedback, the design of learning programmes aligned to specified learning objectives, taking a more systematic approach to structuring the flow of learning programmes and developing assessment strategies in accordance with the objectives of a course are a few examples. But they do suffer from a tendency to mechanistic application: follow these rules and you will have a successful piece of learning. This isn't the case.

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CONSTRUCTIVISM

The most recent thinking in cognitive psychology places the individual firmly at the centre of the learning experience. At the core of constructivism is the belief that individuals create their own understanding of knowledge and the world. By interacting with their environment, a person constructs, investigates and modifies his or her cognitive model of the world in an iterative fashion. This has profound implications for the whole approach to how learning programmes should be designed. Here are just some of the implications.

- Instructional design becomes concerned with facilitating the individual learning process.
- Materials are incorporated to allow students to develop their own understanding.
- Students are encouraged to integrate the learning experience into their own lives to make it meaningful.

Rather than a teacher-centric process, we have a learner-centric one.

Some experts present a constructivist approach as being antipathetic to both behaviourism and instructivism. However, I would suggest that constructivism is capable of embracing the best that these theories have to offer. There are situations where drilling is appropriate, for example, and we certainly want to continue to pay close attention to the structuring of learning environments. What constructivism does is refocus the prism through which we view learning.

At the core of constructivism is the belief that individuals create their own understanding of knowledge and the world

IMPROVING E-LEARNING

So what does this actually give us to work with? How can we improve the transfer of knowledge into long-term memory, its retention and, most importantly, its effective transfer and application? The following six points arise out of research undertaken in the last ten years or so of what makes 'good' e-learning (and learning in general).

1. Learning is based on existing knowledge and experience

The prior knowledge and experiences that learners bring with them will play an important part in how they interpret new knowledge and make sense of it. It is therefore essential that this prior knowledge is activated when they are learning, by using analogies, metaphors and making parallels with this existing knowledge.

2. Learning is idiosyncratic

As learning depends on the learner's prior experience, and no two learners will have the same experiences, new information will be dealt with in different ways by different learners. This means that programmes must not only offer different paths through the materials, but also they should offer different perspectives on the subject matter.

3. Learning is goal-orientated

Individuals, and adults in particular, approach learning and training with specific objectives in mind. They need to realise that the activities they are undertaking are related to their real-life requirements. And because these needs are often related to solving problems, courses that are task focused situated in environments that help them to activate the knowledge in real-life, problem-centred environments will result in more effective learning.

4. Learning depends on self-awareness

Good learners know not only what and why they are learning but also how they learn. This lets them take a step back from the actual material and start to make the relationships with their existing knowledge and the application of the new information to their needs. Courses need to build in self-reflective activities through questioning and tasks that make this explicit.

Educational psy

People do not learn material in an abstract vacuum, they learn it, and use it, in a socially situated context

5. Learning is social

People do not learn material in an abstract vacuum; they learn it, and use it, in a socially situated context. This idea is becoming increasingly important in the most recent thinking about learning, giving rise to the social constructivist school. Incorporating e-mail, online discussions, virtual communities and other peer-to-peer communication strategies into the whole learning environment is a way of facilitating the social dimension to learning.

6. Learning is active

Developing the neural networks that constitute the physical basis of memory is an active process. Learners who are not engaging with the learning materials – in other words, actively cognitively processing what they are learning – will not have a successful educational experience. One point of interest here is the difference between 'shallow' and 'deep' processing. Rote learning is a typical trait of the former type. Students expend huge amounts of effort memorising information, but fail to integrate it into their own understanding. Deep processing requires the learner to make personal sense of the knowledge. Presenting too much information, presenting information in an abstract fashion, and presenting information screen after screen without allowing learners to actively use the material or require them to apply it in new and meaningful ways positively encourage shallow processing.

Individuals, and adults in particular, approach learning and training with specific objectives in mind

I have deliberately left this last point to the end. For me, active learning is the crucial determinant of successful learning. There are many dimensions to active learning, including:

- individuals' preferences for the way material is presented
- their learning styles
- implementing cognitive strategies for attention focusing
- interactivity, and
- the wider context in which the learning is situated.

However, paramount among these elements, and underlying many of them, is the factor of motivation.

MOTIVATION

We all have a propensity to learn, and absorbing knowledge that interests us is usually not a problem, no matter how the information is presented. The ability of football supporters to reel off infinite amounts of game statistics, players' names and so on is a classic example of this. The trick is to get involvement in material that may not be intrinsically interesting to an individual. How do you create and sustain motivation in the learner over the length of a course?

Learners who are not engaging with the learning materials will not have a successful educational experience

There has been a lot of research into motivation in the last few years, but it is still an evolving field. In e-learning courses, multimedia – animations, video, audio and so on – are often cited as promoting interest and motivation, and to an extent this is true. But they are still passive media.

I think that one of the key weapons is the meaningful use of interactivity. This is a much-abused term, and by the term 'meaningful' I want to emphasise interactivity that requires the learner to think. Clicking a button is not interactive, nor is dragging an object to another one to start an animation. Getting someone to categorise, analyse, synthesise, problem solve and so on, is.

Further, the more targeted the feedback is that they get doing these activities, the more powerful they become – that is to say, the all too pervasive 'That's not right; try again' is massively under-using the potential of the medium.

GAMES

One area in which I am particularly interested is the use of games – not only embedded mini-games that act as knowledge reviews, but also immersing whole courses in a game environment. When you are doing something you really enjoy, you may have experienced 'flow state', the feeling that comes when you are so completely involved in something you don't notice you have been occupied the whole night. Games playing is a good example. This might seem far fetched, but my most recent efforts in this direction involved taking a legal course in risk management and putting it into a time travel scenario. Games do not only involve problem-solving applications of knowledge techniques but also elements such as manual dexterity and humour supported by Artificial Intelligence (AI) to create such environments.

THE POWER OF THE HUMAN MIND

What I am asking for is that we respect the power of the human mind. The ability of the brain to process information is phenomenal: we do it a disservice with the impoverished learning environments that are so common. Multimedia courses are often promoted as a remedy to this, but look at what many of them offer. Tedious static pictures, clip art, maybe a talking head video. The brain can process 36,000 visual cues per hour!

Research establishes the capacity of the brain to 'dual process' both visuals and words, and that capitalising on this ability creates deeper understanding and greater recall. The brain has to work to expand neural interconnectivity, and to do that the learner must actively participate in the experience. A recent study showed that the brain is more active when it is sleeping than when watching TV.

Good e-learning has the power to be the equivalent for the mind of an hour down the gym. Strategies and techniques such as those we have been looking at are like having a personal trainer advising you and pushing you on. It is what is needed if we don't want e-learning to be a couch potato. ■

References

1. For more information about BF Skinner, visit www.bfskinner.org/index.asp

2. Robert Gagné, *The Conditions of Learning*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977.

Stephen

THE E-LEARNING

Professor Stephen Molyneux is the nearest thing the world of technology and e-learning has to a superstar. Mike Levy caught up with him recently to find out what triggers his passion and enthusiasm.

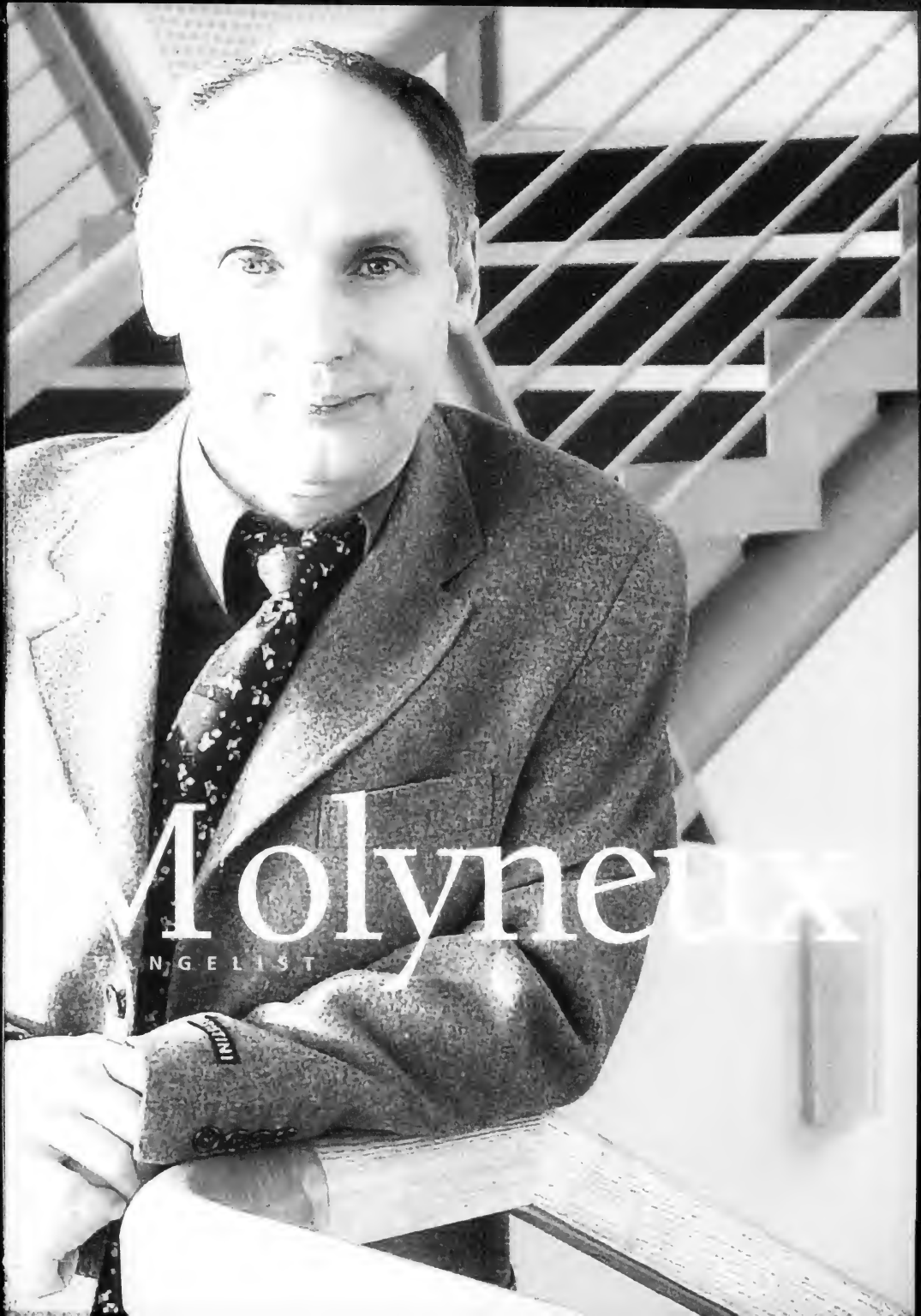
Stephen Molyneux, head of the Learning Lab, is a self-confessed techno-disciple with an apocalyptic vision: 'I am a 100 per cent evangelist for e-learning, which will be increasingly disruptive … although it's all for the best.' He insists that current models of learning will soon be totally replaced: 'Education and training processes were designed for the Industrial Age. We need to radically overhaul the way we deliver training.' The Learning Lab is the result of discussions between the University of Wolverhampton and two of the leading IT companies supporting the education and training sector: Microsoft and ICL. Molyneux felt that a centre of excellence, supported and funded by the industry, could assist in sharing the vision, educating the marketplace, demonstrating the technology and providing market intelligence on users' needs back to the industry in order to ensure that products and services are 'user-centric'.

Molyneux and his team sold the idea to some of the biggest ICT companies in the country and the Lab was launched in November 1999. In order to ensure that visitors receive unbiased advice, the Learning Lab brings together both collaborators and competitors. It is a free-to-access 'drop-in centre', which acts as a resource base-come-showcase for the best in learning technologies. So far, it is one of the very few in the world.

Molyneux's CV confirms that he is a workaholic whose status in the ICT and learning world is undeniable. His official title at the Telford campus is director of the Learning Lab, but he is also Microsoft Professor of Advanced Learning Technologies at the University of Wolverhampton. Rarely off the airwaves (he was recently a guest on BBC Radio 4's *The Learning Curve*), he is recognised as one of Europe's leading experts in the field of learning technologies. In 1998, he was appointed a distinguished Fellow of International Computers Ltd, a subsidiary of Fujitsu. Two years ago, he was awarded the World Open Learning Award for outstanding personal achievement in promoting the use of technology to support education and training.

The oracle

Molyneux's views are highly sought after in the corridors of Whitehall and Brussels, and he is seen as something of an oracle for organisations keen to gaze into the uncertain future of training and education.


Molyneux
EVANGELIST

'Education and training processes were designed for the Industrial Age; we need to radically overhaul the way we deliver training'

He explains that organisations face two big problems: 'What technology is available and how they make use of it, and where they go for independent ICT advice.' He also points to the problems of getting industry and education to connect. 'Industry is providing new technologies. It is difficult to sell these to the educational sector – not because there isn't any money, but because they don't meet teachers' needs,' he says. The Learning Lab, he hopes, can fill this gap.

Molyneux and his team believe that there is a profound need to bring together the many initiatives to promote learning technologies. 'I believe that initiatives such as the University for Industry and the National Grid for Learning are paving the way to make the UK a knowledge-based society, and the UK government should be applauded for its visionary attitude to such initiatives,' he says, adding he is convinced that without a national strategic framework it is increasingly difficult for academia, industry and local government to devise their own local strategies based on the needs of their citizens. This is compounded by the fact that ICT is such a fast-moving industry, users are sometimes confused with what is on offer. Molyneux is also convinced that industries supporting the teaching and learning sector are unaware of the needs of their customers.

Initiatives

The Learning Lab currently runs various initiatives with the Department of Education and Skills, including the National ICT Research Centre. 'We have two main thrusts,' says Molyneux. 'How the government is going to address the "digital divide", and whether current policies are actually providing solutions.' His team is also looking at the new requirements of the 21st-century workforce and asking if government policy is actually increasing the potential for those with ICT skills to move into employment. 'What we want to know is, if you have ICT skills at a variety of levels does this assist you in being more employable?' questions Molyneux. For example, if you are working on the shop floor with nothing to do with ICT, would the acquisition of new computing and technology-based skills move you up the employment ladder?

'What we want to know is, if you have ICT skills at a variety of levels does this assist you in being more employable?'

Additionally, Molyneux is working with the Learning and Skills councils looking at the post-16 sector – in particular, the role of e-learning skills – questioning: 'When we move from traditional classroom techniques to e-training, are the skills needed by learners different and, if so, in what way?' He points to very simple practical issues such as teaching e-learners using e-mail as a collaborative medium that the usual salutations ('Dear Sam' and so on) are just not needed in this highly concise communications medium. 'I don't think people realise that online mentoring and learning are very different from face-to-face delivery,' he claims, adding that, 'They tend to see e-learning as the automation of the training process. It most definitely is not!' Molyneux urges trainers to redefine the whole learning process when embarking on the new technologies, suggesting that 'there has been far too little done to boost e-learning skills'.

Pressure

Molyneux lays the blame for this slack approach to e-learning on some sectors in the corporate training world. 'Too many training vendors see e-learning principally as a way of saving on travel costs,' he says. 'They don't see that e-learning should involve a huge cultural change. Too few corporate training clients ask the key question: "Do we have enough critical mass to mentor the big changes needed to introduce effective e-learning strategies?"'

To address some of these issues, Molyneux and his team have commissioned the University of York to look at the cognitive elements of ICT. 'Up to now, ICT has been technology driven. But it's not about technology – that's been around for at least 30 years. Instead, we must address the completely new ways of learning. Vendors of training packages need to ask, "What should I do to make my products more effective in an e-learning environment?"' There are, says Molyneux, some signs that people are taking these challenges seriously. 'The Institute of IT Trainers is really looking hard at the skills needed to be an e-mentor. But there is a big need to raise awareness, to see what technology can do. We ask companies that come to the Learning Lab, "Do you have a strategy for e-learning?" Most do not.'

Molyneux also sees his role as putting pressure on the software houses. 'Many training products are American in origin and rather technology driven,' he says, although he adds that progress is being made. He points to a lot of rethinking in the way suppliers are designing their software. 'There are some good innovators who are much more learner orientated,' he says, citing products currently being produced by THINQ, which, after advice from The Learning Lab, has just won a large training contract with HM Customs. He also

Stephen Molyneux

THE E-LEARNING EVANGELIST

Reference

1 NETg is a major e-learning product provider.

'Initiatives such as the University for Industry and the National Grid for Learning are paving the way to make the UK a knowledge-based society'

points to the increasing need for products to adhere to international standards such as SCORM (Sharable Content Object Reference Model), a set of specifications for developing, packaging and delivering education and training materials whenever and wherever they are needed. SCORM is what Molyneux calls 'the Java of the e-learning world; it means that content in my NETg[1] package will run on my colleague's Granada Learning software.'

Change is really beginning to bite the e-learning world, says Molyneux. 'Technology-centric learning products are starting to lose market share,' he claims. 'Some are currently re-engineering their products and are increasingly open to listening to potential user's needs. At last, products are being driven by end users.'

The corporate sector, says Molyneux, is a growing market for e-learning solutions developers. 'But it is still too often seen wrongly only in terms of rate of return on investment,' he observes. 'In the past, companies chose from a given pool of employees.' But, he says, as the baby boomers start to retire, that pool is beginning to go dry. 'Graduates now choose you,' he warns, suggesting that companies must offer more incentives for career development. 'Graduates are asking: "Do I have access to online learning? Will you support my lifelong learning?"' Molyneux's point is that the future of company expansion will be in organic internal development.

Molyneux also thinks that in-house training organisations are likely to understand this change. 'But,' he adds, 'I see a growing market for good-quality online mentoring and tuition.' These trainers will work from home, offering their services across the Internet and via e-mail. Such specialists and mentors will be able to provide their services on a global scale, thanks to the new technologies.

The future

And what of the future? Molyneux says that web-based training has increased by 141 per cent since 1999, predicting that in five years everything will be digital and broadband. 'We may also be closer to the Holy Grail of e-learning: a system that allows content to be adapted in real time to meet the needs of individual learners no matter who or where they are,' he suggests, adding that it is already in sight. He gives the example of a smart and adaptive online textbook, which will be able to recognise the learning needs of the user and provide online content to fill any knowledge gap. 'Give this two years ...' he predicts.

However, he warns that technology will be increasingly disruptive and change the way organisations recruit, retain and develop their workforce. There will, he states, be winners and losers – the former being those who really understand the impact of technology on staff development. 'We are right at the beginning of the disruptive phase. Organisations should plan for the major disruption that technology will bring. Some will fail to recognise the threat – and I include some higher education institutions in this.'

According to Molyneux, the strength will come from adaptability, and he has a stark warning for all those who want to keep their heads in the sand: 'We need a new learning culture that asks how we engage people so that they take up the challenges of e-learning. The disruptive wave is coming your way.' How does this apostle of change get any rest from this disturbing but challenging vision? Molyneux pauses to confess, 'I don't get much sleep!' ■

The Learning Lab

The Learning Lab, located at the Telford campus of the University of Wolverhampton, is a not-for-profit centre of excellence. It aims to promote the use of learning technologies in the education and training sector. To do this it is backed by some very big players in the commercial sector, including BT, CISCO Systems, FD Learning, Harcourt Education, Granada Learning, Microsoft, NETg, Plato Learning, RM, Synetrix, THINQ and Ufi Ltd.

The Learning Lab relies 100 per cent on funding from 24 'partner' companies – for example, companies in major telecommunications, ICT publishing, training and service. It also includes funding from the University of Wolverhampton. The Lab is supported by an advisory board from government, professional agencies and independent experts.

Visitors to the Lab can 'play' with the software titles or have a more formal presentation given to them by the providers. They can also seek independent views and advice from members of the Learning Lab. Not all of the products are in the education sector; there are many vocational and business titles, too.

The Lab is much more than a virtual think tank; it is a real place attracting hundreds of visitors a year. These include school inspectors, directors of education, trainers and corporate executives. They come to learn about what is on offer in education and training and to get expert, impartial advice. They can use the range of software and learning environments – or they can book a space in the Lab's smart boardroom – equipped (as you would expect) with the latest in digital technology.

For further information contact the Learning Lab on (tel) 01902 323932, (fax) 01902 323952, at enquiries@learninglab.org.uk or visit www.learninglab.org.uk

Why buy one?

With big money at stake, making an informed decision on whether or not to invest in an LMS, and which one, is crucial. In the first of a three-part series, Howard Hall helps you on your way to understanding all your options.

Howard Hall is an independent adviser and consultant on e-learning. He directs e-learning projects and manages their implementation from the initial feasibility and business case through to delivering change management in the workplace. Howard was head of Training for a major bank and e-learning programme director for a major partnership. He has applied technology solutions to learning for his entire career. He has extensive knowledge and experience of what is now known as the e-learning industry as a supplier, a buyer and a consultant.
Howard can be contacted on 01372 45[illegible]

EVEN WITH THE DECLINE in the buzz and hype of e-learning, Learning Management Systems (LMSs) still constitute a significant proportion of the e-learning marketplace. US vendors of LMSs represent some of the largest e-learning companies in the United States of America. Three of them – Saba, Docent and Blackboard – have a total turnover of US$116 million. Interest would seem to remain high. For any organisation, an LMS will represent a significant investment. In some cases, such a purchase may exceed the first year licence fee of the generic courses that an organisation intends using as part of its e-learning delivery strategy.

Once an LMS has been installed inside an organisation, it becomes very expensive and difficult to backtrack on the decision and install a competitor. Choosing the right LMS is therefore a critical decision for the HR and Training functions. Choosing not to have an LMS may be even more crucial and may be the right decision. This decision is both strategic and tactical. It includes operational, cultural and top management considerations. It affects how the training function is viewed and is closely tied to HR operational issues.

This article focuses on the needs of an internal training function rather than an external supplier, who may need an LMS for charging purposes. It ignores the study tools of some LMSs that provide discussion forums, e-mail connectivity and collaborative learning environments – not because they are not important, but because they deal with separate issues. The article also ignores the authoring capability of some LMSs.

Making the purchasing decision starts with a stakeholder analysis – that is, understanding what the stakeholder wants and needs (not always the same thing). When you know which stakeholders are important and what they get out of it, then choose an LMS or an alternative that suits them and their needs. In the latter part of the article I will suggest some alternatives.

LEARNERS

For the individual an LMS is about access, planning and feedback about progress. A learner may use the catalogue feature, perhaps with his/her supervisor or line manager. The learner selects courses. Courses and material can be included in a learning plan for each individual. The learner can assign dates and times for each of these courses. An LMS may contain information about how long it would take to work through self-study material and the length of face-to-face courses. The LMS can predict the time required by the learner as a total and hours per week, given a target by when the training has to be complete. An LMS may give immediate access to e-learning material, it may enable people to book on to a face-to-face course, and it may dispatch other forms of study material.

An LMS may monitor progress and provide a record for learners on how they are doing, perhaps against their own original target or against others. Hopefully they will gain a sense of achievement from this record, which may include reports from managers or coaches. For the learner the LMS gives access, feedback and a planning tool.

Giving learners access to training costs money. The only type of training free at the point of delivery is e-learning. Even then, it costs the time that the employee spends learning, and that costs as well. All the other forms of training carry some sort of cost, albeit for most self-study material a small element of cost. Managers have to be in a position of deciding how much investment an organisation makes in training material and in prioritising that against individuals. Learning cannot be delivered on a first-come first-served basis. A benefit of an LMS to an individual clashes with that of a manager's needs.

This is part of the complexity involved in the purchasing decision because there are cultural, technical, operational and financial issues.

For any organisation, an LMS will represent a significant investment

LOCAL MANAGERS

The supervisors and line managers of the learners are the next major key stakeholder group. Ideally, managers appraise staff on a regular basis and discuss development and training support. We can imagine an ideal situation in which an appraiser and appraisee sit down and access an LMS. The LMS catalogue matches the employee's needs to learning support. Line managers make decisions about providing those courses and employees make their own arrangements to get hold of them. Local managers get an immediate answer to a development need and control over who spends their time learning. The LMS will then monitor that an employee has booked and completed the course, and report to the manager on successful completion.

Non-e-learning courses need further input from a tutor or administrator that the course is completed. Do your managers make this link between managing performance and managing development? Do they sit down with people in their teams and discuss their development needs? What is the local culture in your organisation? The culture has to be right to capture all the benefits. An e-learning environment makes it easier to develop the right culture. You have to decide which should come first. An LMS is not the only way of achieving an e-learning environment.

TRAINING MANAGERS

There are two groups of stakeholders within the training function: administrators and managers. To capture the benefit of cost reduction, managers will have to reduce the number of administrators. It would be difficult to expect both groups to have the same view of an LMS. Administrators benefit from:

- a simplified booking process for face-to-face courses
- a simplified and automated method of managing training locations and the tutors they use, and
- a reduced risk of error as the learners themselves will carry out the booking process.

Pre-joining letters go out automatically. If pre-cursors are required, an LMS can ensure those are completed before learners are able to book onto a course. An LMS gives a wonderful opportunity for achieving cost savings in administration. Administrative staff can be re-deployed to roles requiring more skills and knowledge.

Managers also gain from access to information – particularly that associated with e-learning. An issue faced by all training managers is proving the value of e-learning. Actually, this applies to all learning, but the issue with e-learning is proving that it is used at all. An LMS does that and also provides figures about all other forms of training.

An extension to the LMS is a Content Management System (CMS), which can include information on the curriculum, breaking it down into its smallest components. This is, of course, what the individual learner sees as a catalogue. Existing material can be included in the data structure in such a way that learners and tutors can access it. The training function no longer has to rely on trainers remembering techniques and knowledge that may be useful to participants on their courses. The content part of the LMS database can do all that for them. It becomes possible for anyone to search the data for topics relevant to the particular issues with which they are dealing. Website Content Management Systems are available that manage electronic resources in general in this way.

HR MANAGERS

HR managers will focus on proof of capability and cost. An LMS may deliver tests to learners and subsequently record results. For example, proof of compliance to training standards is required in both the financial services and aviation industries. All companies must be compliant with health and safety training requirements. An LMS gives an employer an instant snapshot of the qualifications of its workforce, particularly in the compliance topics.

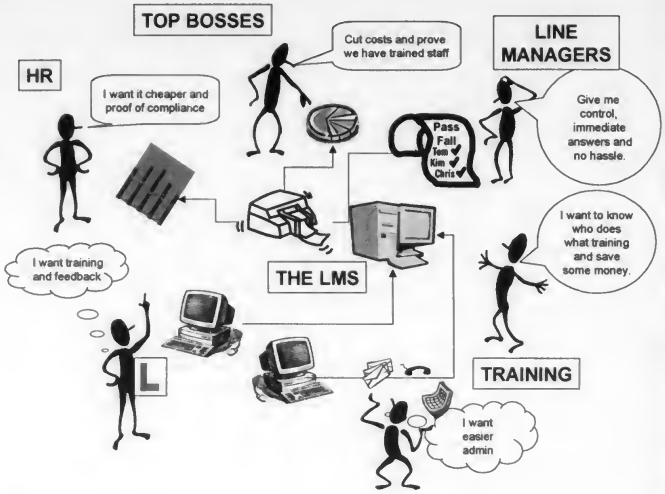
Additionally, an LMS provides central control over what is and what isn't provided to employees. Much of existing training is wasted because it is delivered at the wrong time, to the wrong people. Forty per cent is quoted as the probable waste because employees are sent on courses:

- a long time before they take up the job
- after they have been doing it for months
- for a rest
- as a reward, or
- to fill a place already booked.

An LMS eliminates much of this by aligning the courses available to an individual's job role, corporate goals and a competency framework. An LMS provides:

- management data to the HR function
- data on individual learners and learners en masse, and
- the cost of courses by participant, media and topic.

HR managers can monitor the efficiency and functionality of the training department. They can see which line managers use training and which ones don't.



TOP MANAGEMENT

Those in top management need to run the business to maximise profit, which means lowest cost and highest income. And that is an obvious statement! Income is linked to customer satisfaction, which is related to employee competency. For regulated topics, this competency must be proved. Management information based on test scores and workplace assessment may be used to prove that competency. An LMS provides that.

Cost reduction is linked to employee effectiveness. Compliance rarely has to be proved in this area. It may help those in top management in representing their company as a good employer or an effective business if they have data about employee qualifications and training provided. Almost every annual report includes a statement that a company's employees are an important asset. Few make numerical statements about how that asset is being developed. An LMS could do that.

Top management is interested in reducing the cost of the training function and getting an increased output. It appears that an LMS may do that. Most companies will want a return of more than 12 per cent on the capital investment they make in an LMS. What sort of business goals will deliver that? More on that in a future article in this series.

ALTERNATIVES TO AN LMS

Much of the data held by an LMS is about employees. An extension to an existing HR system will hold all the data about employees in one place. Data is entered directly or transferred from a data-recording package, which may itself be a reduced functionality version of an LMS.

Course information may be available in an electronic catalogue using standard browser tools. A complex database is not required for this catalogue that may be linked to job roles. An LMS will remember which courses an employee has already completed, so a simple catalogue requires learners and managers to exercise more judgement than an LMS does.

An LMS may monitor progress and provide a record for learners on how they are doing

Delivery of e-learning does not need an LMS; it needs learners to be able to select what they need through a catalogue and then a menu from which they select the course.

The administration function of an LMS is unique in that any alternative will be an LMS! The scope and functionality of such a system is not enterprise-wide; however, the costs are proportionally lower.

CMSs that manage website content are appearing and will compete with this aspect of an LMS. Savings are those of efficiency and effectiveness within the training function, thus the scope is more limited than a full LMS.

Extracting some of these benefits requires cultural and operational changes, and the readiness of the organisation to make these changes is assessed as part of the purchasing decision. ■

Parts 2 and 3 of 'Learning Management Systems' will appear in the February and March 2003 issues of *Training Journal*.

A summary of Learning Management Systems functions and users

Stakeholder / LMS feature	Learners	Managers	Training function	HR function	Top management
Personalised catalogue	Immediate choice	Employees only see what is suitable for their job role	Fewer inappropriate attendees on courses		
Course booking	More convenient access	Immediate answer to training	Less administration	Lower administrative costs	Lower training headcount
E-learning delivery	Immediate answer to training need	Immediate answer to training need	Lower cost of delivery	Cheaper	Cheaper and immediate answer to workforce training
Learning plans	Future development clear	Hand over responsibility for monitoring progress to the LMS			
Monitoring progress		Easy answer to monitoring progress	Report on how much training is done	Way of measuring efficiency of training	Report on how much training is done
Achievement record	Sense of achievement		Proof of compliance		Report on workforce capability and competence
Managing venues and trainers			Less administration	Lower administrative costs	Lower training headcount
Content management			Better reuse of training material	Less irrelevant training material	Lower training costs

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Sue Honore takes a look at different levels in the management and executive scale and assesses whether technology might be a useful tool in helping managers to continue their development in the workplace.

Learning to lead

LEADERSHIP IS A HOT TOPIC. In a recent survey on best practice in management development, 76 per cent of European organisations said that leadership was a core area of focus for them, with more than half saying it ranked first or second in terms of demand from employees. Why leadership? It seems to be a problem that has built up over the last decade. Increasing pace of change and uncertain markets have resulted in people who focus on targets and deliverables. They are important, but there is only so far that the mathematics can rule. Ultimately organisations consist of human beings, and further productivity requires competent, adaptable people leaders. In their search for ways to develop their leaders, many organisations have been taking a fresh look at learning methods.

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

Can someone learn to be a leader? The consensus from the interviewees was that good leaders tend to be 'born', but that leadership can be taught to a wide audience, with the end result that the 'born leaders' can hone their skills and the rest of us can develop a greater understanding of how natural leaders act, and where to improve our own behaviour.

We found that the term 'leadership' means many things to many people. At one extreme it is basic supervisory management. At the other, we are talking about inspirational captains of industry. Our survey showed that lack of clarity on definitions of 'leadership' and 'e-learning' is often the reason for people claiming that e-learning cannot be used to train leaders. If you say 'corporate e-learning' to your colleagues, do they imagine a happy director at his PC clicking on self-paced content to test if he knows the ten vital ingredients of a superior leader? Maybe the self-paced part is in their minds, but certainly not that happy director.

Ultimately organisations consist of human beings, and further productivity requires competent, adaptable people leaders

Sue Honore has conducted this research for eLearnity, a leading independent learning research and consultancy organisation. She has special interests in management development, learning design and best practice in e-learning.
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There is no 'one size fits all' for a leadership programme, and we found widely differing but successful solutions

LESSONS LEARNED

So what have we learned from this survey in best practice in programme design? And where does e-learning fit into the story, if at all? There is no 'one size fits all' for a leadership programme, and we found widely differing but successful solutions. However, there were probably four key variables that affected the development of a successful programme.

- Design – the commitment to properly analyse and design a solution, then actively manage the programme.
- Personalisation – targeting the solution depending on the need, experience and position of the individuals.
- Experience and feedback – leadership is not gained purely through teaching.
- Technology – making the best use of technology.

GETTING STARTED

Leadership is not a simple skill like using Microsoft® Word®. There are few right and wrong answers, and it is highly culturally and individually based. By its nature it applies to a small proportion of the total corporate audience, and therefore is more expensive to develop and deliver. So getting the learning needs phase of the design right was highlighted as critical by the interviewees. Many had experienced 'false starts' in this area.

We saw examples where middle management training staff had failed to understand the needs of director-level employees for a leadership programme, because they were simply intimidated or too easily swayed by the ideas of one strong character. In other cases the true value of expensive seminars by 'personalities' was questioned. Some companies, still in the drill-and-test world and looking for cost savings, jumped on the self-paced e-learning bandwagon a few years ago, and are now having to rethink their approach to learning for complex subjects such as leadership.

▸▸

with e-learning

Technology does have a useful role to play in 21st-century leadership programmes; the key to success is being able to use it appropriately

Learning to lead with e-learning

Linking a leadership programme into the corporate performance evaluation process is also important. The honest companies admit that this link was present in theory, but sometimes not in practice!

What do successful leadership programmes developed in European organisations look like? A common theme is that the programmes are blended – they involve both face-to-face and distance learning, and group as well as individual work. They take place over an extended period of time and are not 'boot camp' classes. They have a structure and framework, but are flexible enough to accommodate individual needs and changes in the business and market. Oh, and they have a determined person driving them forward, often a little battered and bruised! Microsoft Word training is definitely the easier option.

One of the most striking points from our survey was that the approach, content and use of e-learning were clearly different depending on where the individuals sat in the organisation.

FIRST STEPS IN LEADERSHIP

At the lower levels of management there is a tendency, because it is relatively mass-market and knowledge-based, to keep the training generic, often mixing classroom and self-paced e-learning. It is successful to a certain extent, but we have found the best programmes are those where the immediate supervisor of the learner is a key player in follow-up evaluation and real-world exercises.

This post-classroom phase doesn't just happen automatically. There needs to be a carefully defined timetable, activities and a progress chaser, who reminds participants of deadlines and helps them work through priorities and issues. Our respondents often listed this person as a critical success factor in a programme.

Off-the-shelf self-paced e-learning content works well here, if the product is chosen to match the corporate approach and supplemented with other activities. It can reduce the classroom time and allow learners to work at their own pace. It is not a complete answer.

MIDDLE MANAGERS

At this level it is more a case of honing the skills already acquired and learning more advanced leadership techniques. There is less theory and more discussion, practice and evaluation, but often still based around a core classroom workshop, according to our survey. Occasionally business schools supply part of the programme, but mostly the content is sourced from commercial training providers.

The solution is more personal; a more specialist guide is needed, an internal mentor or an external coach. We were surprised at how many organisations advocated a coaching-led solution at middle and senior management. It's expensive, but the message is that the coaching element is critical in maintaining motivation and meeting individual needs.

Electronic solutions are less common, with e-mail being the most widely used tool to support discussions and mentoring. Fact-gathering is not critical at this stage, so 'click and turn' e-learning plays less of a role. However, having opportunities to make mistakes in a safe environment is important in developing skills such as leadership. Basic soft skill simulations can be found in generic e-learning content, but they just aren't realistic enough for people at this level. Electronic business simulations are getting better, but we didn't see widespread use of them for leadership courses outside business schools. Good ones are expensive to buy (and build!), but can add a lot of value.

One challenge is to get technology-adverse-for-learning managers online in the first place. A hint given to us by one organisation is to use quality commercial online leadership evaluation instruments; managers like to see personal feedback on their performance.

EXECUTIVE STAFF

This group is the hardest to 'train'; in fact, most want to avoid it. We found that many organisations had no formal programme in place, but that solutions were determined on an individual basis. Sometimes that's fine, but the survey also revealed that people at this level can be very inward looking, and opportunities as a group to share experiences of successful leadership, both internal and external, can be very worthwhile.

Without a doubt the key element of success at this level appears to be coaching, always supplied by external vendors, usually face to face or by telephone.

E-learning has barely penetrated this group; its historical reputation and senior management fear of technology may be what is holding it back. It's a pity, because it may be a key ingredient to executive leadership learning.

What do successful leadership programmes developed in European organisations look like? A common theme is that the programmes are blended

WHAT IS MISSING?

E-learning is still wrongly perceived as that 'self-paced stuff' the directors hate. We believe that, like the successful companies in our survey, organisations need to be more creative in making use of the full range of electronic tools to support development programmes. Of course, there are real-world obstacles. I'm sure none of you work in an organisation that has spare training and development staff or that has an infinite budget for IT tools! Yet networking and knowledge sharing are vital ingredients of learning about leadership, especially at the senior levels, and technology can really enhance that communication. A text-based online discussion forum where leaders can share experiences and advice can be very effective. Combine it with an online knowledge database of useful contacts, links, FAQs, articles and training nuggets to add even more value.

The synchronous virtual classroom is an incredibly powerful tool that can be particularly successful with middle and senior managers. The managers can attend a one-hour session from anywhere in the world and participate in anything from a brainstorm to a coaching session. Many of these tools also allow recording so that those unable to attend can view them later. Guest speakers are more accessible, more cost-effective and often more willing to provide virtual sessions, whether via text or live seminars, than if they have to travel.

Technology does have a useful role to play in 21st-century leadership programmes. The key to success is being able to use it appropriately – to *support* well-designed learning activities. Managing learning through technology takes time, money and human resources, but when it works it is incredibly powerful. Expand your horizons, and look into some of these new tools and approaches for your leadership programme. I promise it will be worth it. ■

Reference

1. 'Leadership and Management Development – Europe 2002', available from www.elearnity.com/leadership

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Striving towards

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Striving towards a bet

Jeet Khaira explains how a new e-learning programme is helping the police to deal with diversity issues.

ter society

Employing people from a wide range of backgrounds makes good business sense, with many companies believing it can give them a competitive edge

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST INDIVIDUALS is being tackled robustly by the government in a bid to bring about an equal society where cultural, social and racial diversity is respected. Indeed, plans are already under way to deliver some fundamental changes that will have a real impact in every workplace, making Britain a better place to live and work.

This is welcome news given the rapid rise in litigation cases in the UK – from unfair dismissal to sexual harassment. Companies that do not articulate their commitment – not only to race, gender and culture, but also age, business practices, supplier/customer relationships, as well as career and promotion opportunities for employees – risk losing millions of pounds and ruining their corporate reputation. These are not just issues affecting the private sector. It is equally important for public sector departments and services to exercise the same commitment to lead the way forward and demonstrate their pledge to genuine, unbiased relations with the diverse population that makes up the UK.

Given this backdrop, it has become all too evident that both private and public sector employers need to educate staff, including management, on the positive aspects of diversity and show them how to embrace it. However, it is not just about avoiding court battles. Employing people from a wide range of backgrounds makes good business sense, with many companies believing that, if managed effectively, it can give them a competitive edge and enrich organisational effectiveness. Within the public sector, adopting this approach will help to improve public confidence in government services among people from all walks of life.

THE CHALLENGE TO TRAINING

The training challenges are enormous, but not insurmountable. Running training programmes for employees is an excellent way of pressing home the message that a mixed workforce is good for business, the community and the economy as a whole.

By providing programmes in the form of e-learning packages offers a flexible, convenient and cost-effective route to raising sensitive issues in the workplace. It also enables companies to adapt quickly to these issues. Having spent 20 years in the IT industry, I know from personal experience that e-learning can help to meet the explosive growth in corporate learning requirements on diversity.

An example of how an e-learning diversity programme can be applied is the new e-learning programme *Working on Race and Diversity*, which Video Arts developed with Centrex, the Central Police Training and Development Authority. The programme aims to help police personnel deal with community and race relations (CRR) and diversity, which have become central to policing.

Occupational standards in CRR were set as a result of the MacPherson recommendations after the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.[1] The challenge that Centrex faced was to assist police services in meeting these standards and help them to understand the complexity of CRR in the UK. Recognising that they needed visual, knowledge-based learning, Centrex appointed Video Arts to jointly develop a multimedia programme that provided personnel with the required knowledge and training in CRR.

The programme was developed using Centrex material, combining real footage and situations with scripted scenarios played out by actors. Provided in the form of a multimedia CD-ROM, the programme has an interactive, user-friendly magazine format.

The key benefits of the e-learning programme are that it can be used by a wide-ranging audience and its flexible learning structure can be adapted to meet distinct training needs faced by all police services, while ensuring consistency across the UK. It offers the opportunity to present comprehensive learning courses while reducing the often costly expenditure of offsite training as well as providing greater flexibility to the user.

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The programme's flexible learning structure can be adapted to meet distinct training needs faced by all police services, while ensuring consistency across the UK

FORMAT

The programme can be accessed on force networks, intranets or directly on a PC. This means that personnel can access information at their own convenience, allowing them to overcome obstacles such as shift work or location constraints, and eliminating the need for them to attend classroom courses. The programme also enables police services to take responsibility for their own learning and commit to the programme.

Additionally, the e-learning format offers opportunities that would be impossible with traditional training methods. For example, no other training method would enable over a quarter of a million police personnel to be briefed within a short space of time.

Similar training formats can be applied to any organisation, allowing busy professionals to self-train on diversity topics where they want (be it at their desks or on a train via a laptop) and when they want (whether it's just-in-time or just in case). Some small- and medium-sized businesses may be reluctant to tackle these issues as they have tighter budgets and less time and flexibility. However, alternatives are available and these businesses need to be made aware of the importance of diversity to ensure that they maintain a competitive edge against the giants and the niche-players in their sectors.

FOCUS

The training should focus on the needs of employees as well as their rights and responsibilities at work, and can cover a wide variety of topics including bullying, harassment, work/life balance and discrimination. As there is much information to be consumed, these topics can be broken down into a number of different course modules, enabling employees to easily fit the training around their busy work schedules.

Learners have the option to choose an individual article, section or module to pursue at any given time so they do not need to absorb the whole CRR package in one go. Each section has an operational summary that can be used on a practical day-to-day basis. Altogether there are over 60 topics to be delivered and they are each covered within the programme. However, they are weighted and incorporated in a way that makes them simple to follow, so gaining the required knowledge is not daunting. These are divided into various groups according to the amount of learning involved.

The top level modules, of which there are nine, deal with the larger issues and have received much more intensive treatment. They cover, for example:

- why it is important to increase trust and confidence in policing among minority groups
- positive aspects of diversity
- the impact of racist and hate crime on victims and their families, and
- how police personnel arrive at their own values and attitudes.

The other topics receive less detailed coverage but still include the information the learner would need to meet the standards. Similarly, there are some issues, within the organisation, that merit greater discussion than others.

A realistic view of the issues within the organisation and the wider marketplace must be presented within the topics and current diversity policies investigated. It is therefore vital to consult as many people and organisations as possible – for example, management, staff and even other trainers who may have put something similar in place – before any topics are agreed. There are a number of questions to ask, including the following.

- Does the company have a diversity mission and vision?
- What are its current policies and practices?
- What measures are already in place to develop and support these issues?
- What efforts are made to recruit and retain a diverse workforce?

Developing the programme has been a partnership throughout, with open discussions and wide consultation through a focus group programme that involved community and youth groups as well as representatives from the Black Police Association.

Using the very latest technology, each section has an operational summary that can be used on a practical day-to-day basis

A FINAL ASSESSMENT

We have been allowed to produce a realistic and viable learning tool with community involvement. This has meant being honest about the community view of the police and how the police work. It does include some negative images but works through to positive responses, showing how a range of different attitudes and actions is received.

Being aware of the need for diversity and training staff accordingly on the issues will create a well-balanced workforce, helping to improve productivity across the board. As recent research has shown, having a diverse working environment can also improve recruitment and retention, help firms to understand better their markets and the communities in which they operate, enhance their reputation and save them money.

As recent research has shown, having a diverse working environment can also improve recruitment and retention

I'll leave you with one final thought. Diversity should not be confused with equal opportunities or positive action programmes. Diversity should benefit everyone. It is about creating a level playing field for all employees. ■

Reference

1. Stephen Lawrence was murdered on 22 April 1993 in a racial attack. A subsequent report from Sir William MacPherson in 1999 into the death of Lawrence acknowledged institutional racism and made 70 recommendations that would help to eliminate racial injustice

Making e-learning work

E-learning offers a range of opportunities for making training more effective – but organisations need to be aware of potential pitfalls. It's not all plain sailing the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) provide their top ten tips.

E-LEARNING HAS BEEN SEEN as something of a holy grail to learning, but many organisations have let the hype get in the way of the reality. In their rush to be part of the e-learning revolution, they have not always achieved the results they desired at the outset.

The message coming back from organisations that are making progress is that they have each experienced their own learning curve and have made adjustments along the way. Another important consideration is that one size does not fit all – the needs of the organisation must drive the solution.

In discussions with organisations, the CIPD has identified a number of learning points.

- E-learning should be regarded as a change initiative – not as a way of saving on the cost of more traditional forms of training.
- E-learning has to be driven by training, not the technology. It is the knowledge imparted and learned, not the wizardry of the IT that is key.
- The proportion of staff who regularly use a PC at work is a critical consideration in the design of any e-learning initiative.
- Organisations must develop appropriate strategies for employees who do not have access to PCs or the necessary IT skills.
- Blended learning is seen by many as a process in which appropriate e-learning modules are a precursor to a training session in the classroom.
- The purchase of generic off-the-shelf material is most likely to be of value for IT end user or IT specialist applications.
- Bespoke or customised materials – either in-house or from a specialist software supplier – are often created to meet essential business needs (compulsory training); other early uses of bespoke material are performance appraisal, standard procedures or induction.
- Learning resource centres can be a useful facility – especially where a significant number of employees do not regularly use a PC at work.
- Learner support is critical – part of the role of the organisation is to support, encourage and motivate people to learn – and give them the time to do so.
- E-learning is an increasingly important part of the learning and development process, but it must be subject to individual and organisational needs. Only then will we see the full benefits of this – and the possibilities are endless.

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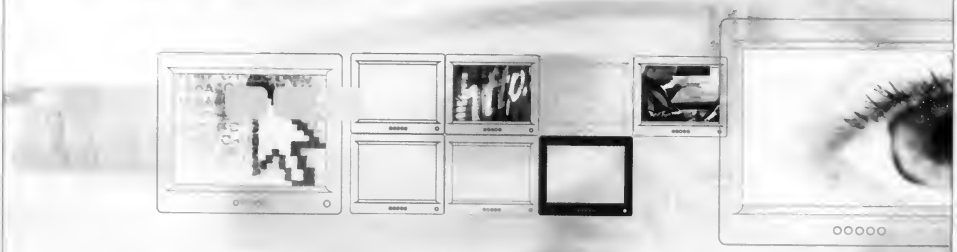

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TJ AD

As David Wilson explains, we've had the e-learning hype and reality. But now that the dust has settled, what next for this mode of learning?

Going mainstream: e-learning in 2003 and beyond

It is clear that e-learning is here to stay as an important tool, and that a blended model is likely to be the dominant model going forward

The last couple of years have been a real roller-coaster for the e-learning market. The year 2000 was something of a gold rush, with seemingly anyone connected with training and technology suddenly reinventing themselves as 'e-learning providers'. The following year saw the hype-cycle take over. E-learning product companies became 'solution' companies. All the main vendors seemed to strike alliances with all the others. Corporate budgets rapidly began to increase and new vendors appeared from everywhere. But 2001 also saw the death of dotcom economics, the start of a big decline in the stock market and, not least, September 11 and an accelerating corporate uncertainty on many new investments. Overall the e-learning market grew significantly in 2001, but it still ended up very depressed.

In 2002, reality dawned – with a bump. The market continued to be depressed and so did the vendors. Corporates were still spending money, mainly on targeted business projects rather than grand ideas. Most of the larger vendors still saw revenues, but they were mainly flat and not enough to fuel their over-inflated venture capital driven business plans. Profitability and being cash positive again became important if not critical for survival. Uncertainty increased, as did market consolidation.

The year 2002 also saw the growth of the anti-hype cycle. Just as unhelpful as its optimistic cousin, the anti-hype said that, mainly, e-learning wasn't the way of the future. Projects often didn't deliver their expected benefits, vendors looked financially unstable and a risky investment, and the lack of a coherent corporate learning strategy made it hard to successfully put together the pieces of the e-learning investment jigsaw. Blended learning emerged as the compelling story for many organisations on both the demand and supply side.

So what is really going on and what's ahead for e-learning? Well first, our analysis of corporate learning and development across UK and mainland Europe shows increasing real e-learning activity and experience, and an underlying growth in tangible investment in e-learning and blended learning solutions. Government, driven by aggressive e-government targets for 2005, has been spending like never before. The corporate world, while slightly tentative in 2002, is also increasing its underlying investment and activity.

Having talked to and surveyed many FTSE 100 organisations as part of eLearnity's best practice research, it is clear that e-learning is still growing in importance, and that a blended model is likely to be the dominant model going forward. Learning Management Systems, integrated into HR systems, competencies and performance management are very much part of the direction, although sometimes the short-term business case can be problematic.

I see two major factors driving activity and engagement with the market. First, most e-learning initiatives are currently business project driven rather than strategy driven. E-learning is frequently used because of a specific need (often the practical impossibility of a traditional classroom-based solution), rather than a general belief in the benefits of 'e'.

Second, buying processes increasingly reflect mainstream market dynamics and business rules, rather than visionary or early adopter market dynamics. Buyers are looking for guaranteed solutions rather than innovation (and therefore risk). Tactical corporate e-learning investments, while justifiable on a discrete basis, also need to be viewed in a more strategic light. Adoption of e-learning has implications for corporate learning strategy and corporate technology infrastructure, and both require a strategic perspective and investment approach.

Previously, I have characterised this shift to mainstream as 'crossing the e-learning chasm' (*à la* Geoffrey Moore, The Chasm Group[1]). While the demand side has become mainstream, the supply side still largely consists of 'early adopter' suppliers, trying to make the move to mainstream. The shift across the chasm is leading to consolidation in the market, as vendors strive to reach critical mass size and profitability.

Driven by corporate interest in blended solutions, mainstream training providers are now starting to make more significant investments in 'e' components

At the enterprise systems level, there is also now a clear recognition from the ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) and HR systems providers of the need for a competitive learning management solution. More than a year ago, I predicted an increasingly aggressive positioning from the main ERP/HR systems vendors in the e-learning and learning management space. Well, it has happened, and together with stronger capabilities from major consultancies and systems integrators, represents the tangible emergence of 'mainstream' suppliers into the e-learning market.

Mainstream training providers are also now in the game, but still slow to play. Driven by corporate interest in blended solutions, they are now starting to make more significant investments in 'e' components. But this is just the tipping point. Cutting a day off their classroom offering and inserting an e-learning module at the front is not blended learning. Ultimately, they will have to significantly re-engineer their learning delivery processes, breaking apart their precious block classroom delivery events and focusing face-to-face time in higher value ways. This will have major implications for resources, facilities and their business model.

So e-learning has gone mainstream. Despite occasional reservations and variable initial experiences, e-learning is proving a catalyst for major change in mainstream corporate learning. Organisations need to develop clearer strategies for learning, supported by appropriate infrastructure and best practice. Suppliers need to evolve rapidly to compete as 'mainstream' needs-driven providers rather than solutions-driven 'visionary' vendors. ■

Reference

1 The Chasm Group is a consulting practice focused on helping high-technology companies achieve market leadership positions for their core products and services.

David Wilson is managing director of eLearnity, a leading independent e-learning consultancy, which he founded in 1996. David can be contacted on 020 7917 170 or at DavidW@elearnity.com

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*The author of **The NVQ Assessor Toolkit** is Clare Llewellyn West, who has been involved in the assessment of a wide range of occupational standards for over ten years.*

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